

**BAN GUNS, NOT TONGUES** || **ON RACE & DEMOCRACY**

PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

GARA LAMARCHE

# THE Nation.

150

## The Race Is On!

The Editors • Joan Walsh  
John Nichols • Katha Pollitt  
D.D. Guttenplan





FORWARD. THINKING. PEOPLE.



telesUR  
Mondays  
6 PM ET



FS TV  
FREE SPEECH TV  
Sundays,  
12:30 PM ET



Fridays  
8 PM ET



Fridays  
9 PM ET

[lauraflanders.com](http://lauraflanders.com)

# Letters

@thenation.com



## Primary Lesson

In its February 8 issue, *The Nation* endorsed Bernie Sanders for president, trading the cool impartiality of the sidelines for the chance to engage, directly and with vigor, in one of the most consequential Democratic nominating contests in recent memory. Hailing the senator's "audacious agenda," we embraced his "clarion call for fundamental reform" and the transformative integrity of his people-powered campaign. The Vermont senator, we wrote, "has summoned the people to a 'political revolution'"—and transformed the 2016 election in the process. "Bernie Sanders and his supporters are bending the arc of history toward justice," we concluded. "Theirs is an insurgency, a possibility, and a dream that we proudly endorse." (The endorsement first appeared on *The Nation's* website on January 14.)

*The Nation's* decision followed months of debate within its offices and in its pages, printed and virtual. As early as last June, Katha Pollitt penned the first of several forceful columns laying out the feminist case for backing Hillary Clinton. Then, just last month, socialist feminists Liza Featherstone and Suzanna Danuta Walters engaged in a crackling exchange over which candidate—Clinton or Sanders—deserves the progressive vote. Meanwhile, articles by Joan Walsh and D.D. Guttenplan tracked the progress of the two Democratic contenders' respective teams from New Hampshire to Nevada. And John Nichols, who published one of the earliest interviews with Sanders about his presidential aspirations, provided a running commentary on the senator's progressive populism.

Throughout, *The Nation* worked to kindle the kind of robust, high-octane dialogue that this rare primary

of ideas so desperately deserves.

In the weeks since the endorsement was announced, we've been gratified to see that the conversation hasn't slackened. If anything, the rapid-fire exchange of ideas has intensified as *The Nation's* writers have countered and complicated the magazine's declared position with their own sharp opinions.

"After 40 years of voting for male presidents, I'm supporting Hillary with excitement, even joy," wrote *The Nation's* national-affairs correspondent Joan Walsh in an article published online on January 27 ("Why I'm Supporting Hillary Clinton, With Joy and Without Apologies"). Saluting Clinton as "the right and even radical choice," Walsh rejected "the larger message to Clinton supporters...that our demand for equal representation at the highest level of government at last, by a supremely qualified woman who is thoroughly progressive if not a socialist, must sadly wait. Again."

Writer and public-policy analyst Kathleen Geier also weighed in. Although a Sanders supporter, Geier didn't hesitate to sound a friendly but clear-eyed critique of his approach to women's rights and racial justice, shading the candidate's "rare strengths" with necessary nuance. The sentiment was echoed by Ian Haney López and Heather McGhee, both of Demos, in a January 29 web article that found great potential in Sanders's economic-populist message while urging him to push his analysis of racism further.

Most valued of all, however, have been the responses—ecstatic appreciation, stung disappointment, and everything in between—from the magazine's readers.

Overwhelming numbers have written to express gratitude for the

[letters@thenation.com](mailto:letters@thenation.com)

(continued on page 25)

4 DC by the Numbers:  
Sanders's Iowa Boost;  
5 Congressional Races:  
Women to Watch; 13  
Snapshot: Kim Jong-un

- 3 **Populist Fire in Iowa**
- 4 **The GOP Scramble**  
Joan Walsh
- 5 **Activists in the Fray**  
John Nichols
- 8 **Asking for a Friend**  
Liza Featherstone

## COLUMNS

- 6 **Subject to Debate**  
Now I'm With Her  
Katha Pollitt
- 12 **Diary of a Mad Law Professor**  
Ban Guns, Not Tongues  
Patricia J. Williams
- 13 **Deadline Poet**  
Iowa: Sweet Relief  
Calvin Trillin

## Features

- 14 **South Carolina, in Black and White**  
D.D. Guttenplan  
Despite claims to the contrary, race plays a big role in the state's primaries.
- 18 **Exxon and the Climate Fight After Paris**  
Mark Hertsgaard  
The summit's outcome doesn't bode well for the fossil-fuel industry.
- 20 **Rethinking Civic Engagement**  
Gara LaMarche  
Progressives must evolve to recognize that racial justice is essential to democracy.

## Books & the Arts

- 27 **A Serious Man**  
Ava Kofman
- 32 **Barbed Absurdist Excess**  
Ben Ehrenreich
- 35 **Films:** Rabin, the Last Day • Colliding Dreams  
Stuart Klawans
- 37 **In Our Orbit**  
Barry Schwabsky

**I**t is little less than astonishing that Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders—a politician who, not long ago, was widely branded as almost irrelevant, a marginal gadfly from the left—secured a virtual tie with establishment favorite Hillary Clinton in the Iowa Democratic primary. There is no longer any question that the Sanders movement—led not so much by the candidate but by the thousands of young people who first turned out for his rallies and are now turning out to vote—is transforming the Democratic race. Indeed, Clinton eked out a razor-thin victory in Iowa because she veered left and finished her campaign with calls for wage hikes to address income inequality and new taxes on the rich—what *The Des Moines Register* referred to as “populist fire.” But the result gave Sanders, the democratic socialist from the Green Mountain State, a chance to declare: “I think the people of Iowa have sent a very profound message to the political establishment, to the economic establishment and, by the way, to the media establishment.”

When Sanders flew into the first-primary state of New Hampshire the morning after the Iowa caucuses, his supporters greeted him in the name of a political revolution that suddenly seemed very real. Clinton recognizes this: After her bumbling attempts to assail Sanders for his support of single-payer healthcare and progressive tax policies failed to slow the insurgent challenge, Clinton retooled her campaign, infusing it with a “fighting for you” populist rhetoric and declaring, on caucus night, that she was part of “the long line of American reformers who make up our minds that the status quo is not good enough.”

Clinton still has plenty of front-runner advantages, as well as an appeal to core Democratic constituencies that’s likely to give her the upper hand in the post-New Hampshire contest for South Carolina and the bigger states that vote in March. But the crowd-funded Sanders campaign, which has now attracted more than 3 million donations and an ever-expanding cadre of volunteers, can legitimately claim that “the inevitable candidate doesn’t look quite so inevitable.”

The political and media establishment that San-



ders mentioned to the caucus-night crowd in Des Moines must adjust to that reality. Sanders has asked for more debates, while Clinton says she is ready for a “contest of ideas.” Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz must not only recognize but embrace the changing dynamic of this race. The change begins by accepting the need for many more debates. Former Maryland governor Martin O’Malley, who dropped out of the Democratic contest after finishing far behind in Iowa, had objected most loudly to the ridiculously constrained debate schedule, which obscured the candidates from the public by having them spar mostly on weekends or holidays. The party must now recognize that O’Malley was right. Debates do not merely frame the issues; they force candidates to strengthen their messages, to recognize what works and what doesn’t. Ultimately, debates make the eventual nominees better. They also provide an alternative to an electoral era dominated by super-PAC attack ads, which are defining an increasingly ugly Republican contest.

On the eve of the Iowa vote, after MSNBC and the *New Hampshire Union Leader* proposed an unsanctioned debate, Clinton and O’Malley said they were on board. Sanders upped the ante by proposing new debates in March, April, and May. The DNC chair has now signaled that the party is prepared to “sanction and manage additional debates in our primary schedule.” Those contests should expand the range of discussion as well as go deeper on questions like income inequality, mass incarceration, and US foreign policy.

Clinton and Sanders should guard the quality of the discourse by rejecting the pressure to “go negative” with attack ads that will only harm the eventual nominee. The Democrats have been given

VOLUME 302, NUMBER 8,  
February 22, 2016

The digital version of this issue is available to all subscribers February 4 at [TheNation.com](http://TheNation.com).

Cover illustration by Victor Juhasz.



**84%**

Iowa caucus-goers between the ages of 17 and 29 who voted for Bernie Sanders

**69%**

Iowa caucus-goers age 65 or older who voted for Hillary Clinton

**0.3%**

Clinton's margin of victory over Sanders

**51%**

Clinton's polling advantage in Iowa one year ago

*"No matter what the outcome is, we've won. The movement is going to be on steroids now."*

RoseAnn DeMoro, executive director of National Nurses United, the first major labor union to back Sanders.

an opportunity to engage in the “contest of ideas” that Clinton proposes, and in the broader dialogue that Sanders says is needed to shape the future of our politics and our economy. The candidates and the party should seize the opportunity, recognizing that this is not just the debate that Democrats want. It is also the debate that Americans will embrace, as a refreshing alternative to the cruel and all-too-usual contest of nonstarter “ideas” in which the Republicans have trapped themselves.

## The GOP Scramble

*Trump loses, Cruz wins, and Rubio gets a boost.*

*Des Moines, Iowa*

**I** had a premonition that Donald Trump would lose Iowa while listening to him talk in a half-empty Waterloo auditorium the morning of the caucus. He was low-energy, his crowd was low-energy, and I didn’t understand the choice of Adele’s plaintive “Rolling in the Deep”—“We could have had it *a-a-allllllll*”—as his walk-up music. But the truth is I should have suspected it on Saturday morning, when Senator Ted Cruz packed an Ames Hotel ballroom with parents and kids and showed off his high-profile evangelical support. In Iowa, endorsements matter; organization matters. In the end, it seems Trump had little of either, and Cruz had it all.

Cruz was endorsed by four conservative heavyweights: Media Research Center founder Brent Bozell; Family Leader CEO Bob Vander Plaats; anti-immigrant Congressman Steve King, and radio hysteri-

Glenn Beck. Vander Plaats noted that he’d never before been on the same side as King in a caucus, and suggested that was a good omen. Beck told the crowd, “There’s gonna come a time of catastrophic consequences in the next four to eight years, if we make it,” and he assured them that Cruz will be ready: “In his DNA, he knows the Constitution.”

By contrast, two days later, Trump was in Waterloo, alone, name-dropping B-list supporters like Jerry Falwell Jr. and Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio. At the next stop, in Cedar Rapids, he was upstaged by another B-lister, Sarah Palin. Suddenly, his campaign seemed like the mediocre reality-TV hoax many expected it to be when it began.

The biggest development out of Iowa, though, was the emergence of Marco Rubio as *the* establishment candidate. He made the night’s first victory speech, which seemed presumptuous unless you realized that he’d won a big victory with GOP donors, who still matter hugely. Rubio was the story in the moderate Des Moines GOP caucus I attended, where his supporters (plus those of Chris Christie, Jeb Bush, and Rand Paul) all told me the party had to stop Trump and Cruz. “Cruz is playing up to the evangelicals,” said retired Drake University librarian James Leonardo. “You don’t want to be ruled by the Koran—why do you want to be ruled by the Bible?” A

COMMENT

**Nominating Cruz leads to a Goldwater-level loss in the general.**

Rand Paul supporter behind us interjected, “I absolutely don’t trust Trump—he’s working for Hillary,” and said Rubio was her second choice. In the end, the precinct of roughly 130 caucus-goers gave 40 votes to Rubio, 29 to Jeb Bush, 20 to Paul, only 18 to Cruz, and 11 to Trump, plus a handful to Christie and John Kasich. That wasn’t the norm elsewhere in Christian-conservative Iowa, but it’s likely a harbinger of the way the establishment side of the race shakes out in New Hampshire and beyond.

Cruz gave an overwrought, overlong victory speech in which he brazenly annexed Obama’s “Yes, we can” slogan and shared the overquoted, mawkish Psalm 30:5—“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”—which felt like an odd thing to say about an exciting nighttime victory. The networks cut away from Cruz’s self-tribute to Hillary Clinton’s and Bernie Sanders’s respective non-victory speeches; Cruz was still going when Sanders finished.

I found Cruz’s speech the Saturday before the caucus much more instructive, because it laid out the far-right, evangelical agenda that won over Iowa and will form the basis of the rest of his campaign. Cruz listed his priorities on “day one,” and there were some surprises. Number one was predictable: rescind every one of President Obama’s “illegal and unconstitutional executive actions.” But number two—before tearing up the Iran nuclear deal or repealing Obamacare—was instructing the Department of Justice to investigate Planned Parenthood. Go figure. Moving the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was also an urgent matter. Vander Plaats, by the way, mentioned Cruz’s importance to Israel at least three times in his speech.

Cruz argues that taking hard right is necessary to win back the White House after a run of “squishes”—Mitt Romney and John McCain—got the nomination and lost. I think nominating Cruz leads to a Goldwater-level loss in the general, and so do establishment Republicans. Expect an enormous amount of pressure on Christie, Kasich, and Bush to make way for Rubio in the weeks to come. Indeed, Rubio began racking up endorsements while still in Iowa, with South Carolina Senator Tim Scott backing him as the race heads toward his state.

And what about Trump? He’s maintained a large lead in New Hampshire since campaigning began in earnest, but his surprising Iowa loss could take a toll. In Waterloo, I was struck by the fact that nobody from the campaign was trying to direct voters to caucus locations. Organization is more important in Iowa than in any other state, but it will be interesting if New Hampshire voters see his lackluster showing as a sign of insufficient seriousness.

Trump gave a fairly unusual and humble concession speech: “Iowa, we love you. We thank you. You’re special. We will be back many, many times. In fact, I think I might come here and buy a farm. I love it!” I’m not sure if the plainspoken Trump realizes “bought the farm” is an old expression for, well, “died.” He’d surely be the last to say that, and it’s too early to stick a fork in his run anyway. But it was the worst day of Trump’s campaign to date, and it may herald many more bad days to come.

JOAN WALSH

# Activists in the Fray

Ardent reformers are running for Congress.

**M**ass movements start in the streets, marching to the steps of city halls and statehouses to speak truth to power. They open up debates, forcing elected officials to think anew and respond to demands for racial and economic justice, immigrant rights, fair elections, real democracy, and peace. Eventually, however, those who are making the demands realize that they can and should be setting the policies. That sentiment is expressed in presidential politics by Bernie Sanders's talk of a transformative political revolution. And in congressional districts across the country, some of America's most ardent activists and deepest thinkers are entering the fray.

The next Elizabeth Warrens are running for Congress. Some are actually stepping out of academia, as Warren did in 2012, to campaign as champions of fundamental reform. Consider Zephyr Teachout, the Fordham University law professor who is seeking an open congressional seat in New York's Hudson River Valley with encouragement from local Working Families Party activists and groups like the Progressive Change Campaign Committee. Teachout, an expert on money in politics and the author of scholarly texts on the corruption of elections and government, is unapologetic in her activism. She says she plans to focus on "connecting concentrated power and the new monopoly state with how campaigns are funded," and how this is reflected in the country's "unbelievably quick transformation to monopoly capitalism instead of competitive markets in area after area. And that's a vicious cycle with the private-financing model."

Teachout began her campaign by arguing that "people remember being part of the process. They can feel it's breaking. I'm running to take on the political insiders and the corporations and raise up those voices." An insurgent who challenged Governor Andrew Cuomo in the 2014 Democratic primary (winning 34 percent of the vote and carrying the Hudson River Valley counties), Teachout is expected to face a primary challenge; if nominated, she will certainly face a hard fight with Republicans, who are already attacking her as "a radical" with "a Bill de Blasio-like philosophy." But in a year that's likely to see a Democratic presidential nominee winning big in New York State on the fused Democratic and Working Families Party lines, Teachout could be running on those lines as well. That would boost her chances to win the race, which in turn would be crucial in the fight by Democrats to end the GOP's control of

Congress—especially in the House, where Republicans now hold a 246-188 advantage.

A Teachout win wouldn't merely flip a seat from R to D; it would also add a media-savvy, movement-linked Warren-wing activist voice to the House. And Teachout's might just be one in a chorus of new voices in the chamber. Just days before she announced her run, another veteran activist, Washington State Senator Pramila Jayapal, entered the Democratic race to fill the Seattle-area House seat being vacated by progressive Democratic Congressman Jim McDermott.

Jayapal came to prominence more than a decade ago, when she founded the group Hate Free Zone to battle intolerance in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. "When September 11 happened, I just thought to myself that everything is going to change for people who look like me," said Jayapal, an immigrant from India. The group evolved into OneAmerica, an activist organization that focuses on advancing "the fundamental principles of democracy and justice at the local, state, and national levels by building power within immigrant communities in collaboration with key allies."

Elected to the State Senate in 2014, Jayapal has championed wage hikes, voting rights, and protections for immigrants and minorities. Often aligned with Seattle City Councilwoman Kshama Sawant, the Socialist Alternative activist whom Jayapal backed for re-election in 2015, the state senator will face primary- and general-election fights in what *The Seattle Times* refers to as a "solidly liberal" district. But she won't be pulling any punches, as was obvious at an announcement event where she ripped into "people like Donald Trump [who] are whipping up hate and fear across the country, resulting in a rise of anti-Muslim violence."

Like Teachout, Jayapal is amplifying messages that have been taken national by Sanders, whose presidential candidacy has been endorsed by both women. "The vision has to be to fundamentally change the system," says Jayapal, who argues that "corporations and special interests have their voice in Congress, and they have too many members scared of their power. What Congress needs is a progressive voice who is unafraid to take on these powerful interests—who is willing to fight for all Americans, not just the wealthiest 1 percent."

Those themes are being heard more and more in House races around the country. In Nevada, for instance, Lucy Flores, who went from being a high-school dropout who "fell through the cracks" to earning a law degree and winning a legislative seat, is in a highly competitive primary contest for an open seat that Democrats think they can win in November. In January, Flores announced her support for Sanders, declaring: "Now, more than ever, America needs a political revolution."

(continued on page 10)

## CONGRESSIONAL RACES

# Women to Watch

What happens when progressive women take office? Quite a lot.



### JOB CREATOR

Washington State Senator **Pramila Jayapal** was able to earmark \$5.3 million in funding to ensure that women and people of color get support for apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs as part of the state's transportation package.

### EDUCATION EQUALITY

**Jayapal** also drafted a successful budget proviso that requires all of the state's public schools to provide adequate interpretation and translation to parents who speak only limited English.



### WARRIOR FOR WOMEN

Former Nevada State Assembly member **Lucy Flores** introduced a bill, since passed into law, that allows domestic-violence victims to break their lease in order to escape an abuser. Flores spoke in favor of the bill from experience, after having to move repeatedly in her 20s when an abusive ex-boyfriend stalked her.

### IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY

**Flores** also co-sponsored a bill, since passed into law, that allows undocumented Nevadans to obtain driver-authorization cards.

## MOTHER OF DEFEAT

## Women Who Lost the Women's Vote



**Linda McMahon**, a Republican, was on the Connecticut State

Board of Education, but she was far more popular as the CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment Inc. Alas, that popularity didn't translate into votes, as McMahon lost the 2010 Connecticut Senate election with only 39 percent of the women's vote, as opposed to Richard Blumenthal's 60 percent.



Despite pouring \$140 million of her own fortune into her campaign for governor, former eBay CEO **Meg Whitman**, also a Republican, lost the women's vote—and thus the gubernatorial race—by 16 percent.



In 1998, Arkansas Democrat **Blanche Lincoln** became the youngest woman ever elected to the US Senate. In 2010, she lost the women's vote by 16 percent, denying her a third term.



**Christine Quinn** garnered just 16 percent of the women's vote, compared to Bill de Blasio's 39 percent, in the 2013 New York City mayoral elections, bringing an end to Quinn's two-decade-long tenure in city government.

—Anakwa Dwamena

**Katha Pollitt**

## Now I'm With Her

*All these years, have I been outsmarting myself?*

**I**s it wrong for women Democrats to want to vote for a woman Democrat? In primaries, I've always voted for the candidate I thought was more progressive, regardless of sex. In New York's 1992 Senate primary, I voted for Bob Abrams over Liz Holtzman or Geraldine Ferraro. In 2008, I supported Barack Obama over Hillary Clinton. In 2013, I voted for Bill de Blasio over Christine Quinn for New York City mayor. Way back in the distant past, there were times that I didn't support a woman Democrat in the general election energetically, even though I voted for her, because she wasn't left enough for me. At the time, those votes looked high-minded and principled and based on a careful examination of the issues and the candidates' records, but I wonder if I didn't outsmart myself. Abrams was a terrible campaigner and lost to the dreadful Alfonse D'Amato; Ferraro, a more mainstream Democrat with a vibrant personality, probably would have won. Yes, Ferraro supported the death penalty—but should that have been the litmus test for a senator? More than the fact that Ferraro was a solid, experienced feminist—the first woman vice-presidential nominee—and the Senate was 98 percent male at the time? And if not Ferraro, why didn't I choose Holtzman, a hero of the Watergate hearings? She attacked Ferraro over her husband's business dealings in a way that seemed desperate and unfair—but so, if less loudly, did Abrams.

Moving on, I tepidly supported John Edwards in 2008 because he campaigned on the issue of poverty despite being an obvious phony, and then backed Obama even though he gave plenty of loud hints that he wasn't as progressive as the halo around him suggested. (He said he'd bomb Al Qaeda inside Pakistan, for example, and rejected the individual mandate in health insurance, which Clinton and Edwards both rightly said was essential.) I even signed a letter circulated by the great historian Linda Gordon called "New York Feminists for Peace and Barack Obama." I'm kind of embarrassed by that now. I don't regret my vote for Obama—unlike Bernie Sanders, I think the Affordable Care Act was a huge achievement—but was he, on balance, a better president than Hillary would have been? Or even much different?

As for the New York City mayoral primary, if I had a do-over, I would stick with de Blasio over Quinn. She opposed paid sick leave, he supported it, and now we have it. But over my 40-odd years of casting ballots, if I had always voted for the woman in a Democratic race—"voted my vagina," in the unlovely phrase now aimed at Hillary's female supporters—I don't think I would've done worse than I did by choosing the candidate I believed was "the best" on the issues. Looking back, I always had a compelling reason why, in that particular case, the man was better than the woman, but the reasons were always different. The one thing they had in common was that they were more important to me than the simple, brute fact of women being underrepresented at every level of government: 19 percent of Congress, 24 percent of state legislators, a pathetic 12 percent of governors, and, of course, 0 percent of presidents and the major parties' presidential nominees. I factored all of that right out of the equation, and I did it when women officeholders were even rarer than they are now.

As so often happens, I have met the enemy and it is me.

I've taken some flak for supporting Hillary Clinton, and that's fine. It's good that passions are strong. But the extraordinary hostility to the mere notion of women putting a collective thumb on the scale for a woman—not Sarah Palin, but a smart and highly qualified liberal Democrat—got me thinking. After all, it's an accepted fact of American political life that people often vote their ethnicity or race or geography. For decades, New York City politics was organized as Irish, Italian, and Jewish voting blocs electing their own if they could; for the top city jobs, it was de rigueur to visit the "three Is" (Ireland, Italy, and Israel). Boston, Chicago, and many other cities were organized along similar lines. That system may be fading, but not because city dwellers have been persuaded that it's selfish and narrow to vote for "one of their own." Ethnic and racial feelings are alive and well in



*In election after election, I've always had a reason why, in that particular case, the man was better than the woman.*

# MICHAEL MOORE IS BACK WITH HIS MOST DANGEROUS COMEDY!



*“One of the most genuinely, and valuably, patriotic films any American has ever made.”*

-ROGEREBERT.COM



*“Hilariously funny!*  
**MICHAEL MOORE’S  
BEST YET.”**

-SALON

**“AN ACT OF  
GUERRILLA HUMANITY”**

-BBC

*“When you’re done laughing,  
‘Where to Invade Next’ is  
**A MOVIE THAT STINGS.”***

-ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

A FILM BY **MICHAEL MOORE**  
**Where to  
InVAde NeXT**

WHERE TO INVADE NEXT A FILM BY MICHAEL MOORE. A DOG EAT DOG FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH IMG FILMS  
SOUND: FRANCISCO LATORRE. HILARY STEWART. FIELD PRODUCERS: TIERNEY BONINI, ADRIANE GIEBEL, NICKY LAZAR  
ARCHIVAL PRODUCER: CHRISTINE FALL. CAMERA: RICHARD ROWLEY, JAYME ROY. EDITORS: PABLO PRONZI, T. WOODY RICHMAN, TYLER H. WALK  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: MARK SHAPIRO, WILL STAEGER, ROD BIRLESON. PRODUCED BY TIA LESSIN, CARL DEAL. WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL MOORE

© 2015, NORTH END PRODUCTIONS

[WhereToInvadeNext](#) [@WhereToInvade](#) [@WhereToInvadeNext](#) [WhereToInvadeNext.com](#)

**INVAADING THEATERS EVERYWHERE  
FEBRUARY 12**

#WhereToInvadeNext

## Asking for a Friend



Liza Featherstone

## Woke in Love

Dear Liza,

*I'm actually asking this for a (former) friend with benefits. This is the question I imagine he would ask you: "I'm getting the message from a friend (with benefits) that I'm kind of sexist as a lover. Could this be true? Or is it because she's been dating women for the past two decades and just doesn't understand things between men and women? She said I implied that going down on a woman was asking more than going down on a man. She also felt that our conversations focused much more on my problems and interests than hers. Eventually I stopped sleeping with her, because I could tell she thought I was deficient in so many areas! Could you make a quiz that I could use to objectively judge whether I am or am not sexist in my interactions with the women I date?"* —Unfriender

Thanks for channeling your FFWB's question, Unfriender. This would be my response:

Dear Benighted Male,

**Y**our former friend has some life experience—shared by this columnist—that helps her to notice sexist male dickishness and distinguish it from universal inhumanity (which is, of course, also widespread). Here's a quiz, as requested, to help you do the same:

1. When women speak, do you listen, or are you just waiting for your turn to talk? I ask this because it sounds to me as if listening to this woman might have saved your friendship—along with the benefits. Please read Rebecca Solnit's *Men Explain Things to Me*, a wry and funny account of the difficulty some men have in doing this. Failing to listen is not only rude; it also impoverishes you intellectually, because many women are really quite interesting.

2. Relatedly, do you ever ask her about her work or life? I mention this because nattering on about your life without asking about hers replicates tired

and ancient hierarchies. Capitalism values women's labor outside the home far less than men's, while patriarchy (an old-fashioned-sounding word if you skipped women's studies in college, but bear with me) teaches us that women exist to provide company for men. That's the context of your one-sided conversations, but you can change this.

3. Does your FFWB have to travel farther, and more often, than you to enjoy these benefits? If so, then expecting her to do this communicates that you think your time is worth more than hers. There's a social context for that (see previous question). Gallingly, though, between working and taking care of kids, many women have *less* spare time than men do.

4. Do you suggest—through your words or behavior—that it's somehow asking more for you to give oral sex to her than vice versa? If so, keep in mind that she deserves pleasure as much as you. And if you don't eat pussy, Benighted Male, you and she are missing out on the supreme potential of the world's best body part.

5. Do you always pick up the check? Trick question! If you do, this is not sexist. If she assumes you will simply because you're a man, that is (mildly) sexist. But with women making 77 cents on the dollar, your picking up the check is often redistributive.

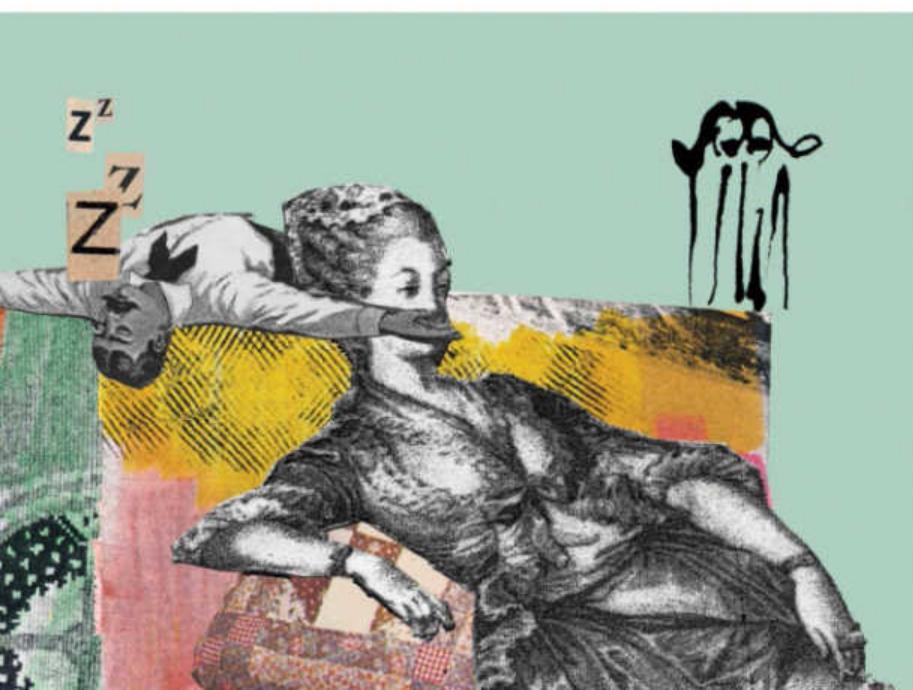
Dear Liza,

*As a black woman with radical politics, I feel like I'm torn between two outcomes for my life: one in which I stay faithful to my politics and end up alone, and one in which I actively seek a partner but end up betraying my politics in some way. My life growing up in a first-gen immigrant family imposed a lot of expectations on me to be docile and acquiescent to all authority figures, so a lot of the ways that I'm trying to be in the world now actively resist that socialization.*

*The problem is that I know all the ways that people can be demeaning or misogynis-*

*(continued on page 10)*

In relationships as well as politics, we all do need to educate one another.



# END ALL U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA

**Statement by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy • January 15, 2016**

We call on the Obama administration to end the U.S. alliance with Saudi Arabia and to stop providing the Saudi regime with military and diplomatic support. The execution in January of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, an opponent of both Sunni and Shiite sectarianism and an advocate of a non-violent strategy, is only the most recent example of the barbarity of the Saudi dictatorship; the government carried out at least 157 executions in 2015, many of them by grisly beheadings. Saudi Arabia's outrageous oppression of women is well known and, as Amnesty International has documented, the regime systematically represses dissent with flogging and other forms of torture, equates criticism of the government and other peaceful activities with terrorism, and continues to discriminate against the country's Shia minority. Washington has issued only pro-forma expressions of "concern" about these human rights violations, while in practice maintaining solid support for the Saudi regime.

The Saudi Kingdom has long played a reactionary role across the Middle East with such actions as supporting Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak to the bitter end and then supporting the repressive Sisi regime that came to power in a coup. When the Arab Spring spread to Bahrain, the Saudi government sent troops into that country to buttress the brutal repression of protesters. In Yemen, the Saudis are engaging in indiscriminate bombings resulting in the death of thousands of innocent civilians. Notwithstanding Saudi Arabia's reactionary domestic and regional policies, the Obama administration has approved new arms sales agreements with the regime, amounting to \$50 billion, while American companies train thousands of Saudi military personnel. And Washington supports Saudi Arabia's deadly war in Yemen, supplying bombs (including deadly cluster bombs), refueling, and logistical assistance.

Washington justifies its alliance with the Saudis and other dictators in the name of defeating ISIS and preserving regional "stability." But the effect of U.S. policy is the opposite. Authoritarian regimes, both secular and sectarian, that have been consistently or intermittently supported by Washington — like those in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Iran under the Shah, and Iraq both before and after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein — have fueled the rise of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other murderous theocratic movements. The only way such groups can be decisively and sustainably defeated is by the victory of grassroots movements for democracy and social justice across the region — from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to Iran, Syria and beyond.

The United States and other Western powers bear responsibility for enabling the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda not only

because of their support for repressive regimes, but also because of their disastrous military interventions. In addition, the West has pressured countries throughout the Middle East to adopt harsh neoliberal policies that have cut social programs and reduced the already miserable living standards of ordinary people. When most of the mass movements of the Arab Spring for democracy and basic economic rights were crushed, jihadism gained in appeal. Moreover, Israel's denial of the basic rights of the Palestinian people — a policy that receives massive support from Washington — has produced legitimate anger across the region, anger that has often been hijacked by authoritarian fundamentalists in the absence of a progressive solution.

To be sure, the United States and the other Western countries are not solely responsible for the rise of groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Other regional powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran share responsibility, and Russia, by backing Assad's brutal dictatorship, has made its own catastrophic contribution. However, a new democratic, peaceful and just U.S. foreign policy could start to reverse the horrific downward spiral of politics in the Middle East. An important element of such a policy would be for the United States to end all forms of support for the Saudi government. At the same time, we offer our solidarity and support to the brave Saudi women and men — many of them behind bars — who are working for democratic change, as we offer support to all movements in the Middle East that struggle for democracy and challenge inequality and repression. They are our hope.

To: Joanne Landy & Thomas Harrison, Co-Directors, CPD

Add my name to the CPD Saudi Arabia statement. You may use my name in statement publicity.

I am making a tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help publicize the statement.

My name.....

Affiliation or city (for ID only) .....

E-Mail .....Phone .....

Address .....

*Only name, affiliation or city will be public. To sign online or see the signer list, go to [www.cpdweb.org](http://www.cpdweb.org). Checks payable to "Campaign for Peace and Democracy" or donate at [www.cpdweb.org](http://www.cpdweb.org). For credit card, send card #, exp. date and amount to Campaign for Peace and Democracy, 2808 Broadway, #12, NY, NY 10025. Contact: [cpd@igc.org](mailto:cpd@igc.org)*



Official White House photo by Pete Souza

Why is there such hostility to women who want to put their thumb on the scale for other women?

(continued from page 6)

presidential politics today: It is assumed that there's a Latino vote, and there's been much speculation whether Marco Rubio—whose election would be of no practical benefit to Latinos whatsoever—could win a good share of it. Nobody says, "How short-sighted of Latinos to consider ethnicity in casting their ballot." Similarly, only racists criticize black people for their near-unanimous support for Barack Obama. And if he hasn't done a lot for them? That wasn't the only reason that he got African Americans' vote. The sheer fact of a black president is an enormous thing, and not just for black people. That's why elderly ladies in Harlem are still wearing their OBAMA buttons eight years later.

Why should women be different? I want to tear my hair out when women say they don't support Hillary because she's "not likable" or "too ambitious" or "too stiff." Ladies, you're not voting for a best friend! Choose Bernie if you like—I won't say a word against him. But don't reject the first woman in history who could win the White House because she doesn't fit your notion of how women should behave. Men put a thumb on the scale for men all the time: It's called being "gender neutral" while defining leadership in male terms. (Can you imagine a 74-year-old democratic socialist named Bernice Sanders making a run like Bernie? The jokes write themselves.) And overt misogyny still ex-

ists. You'll never persuade me that "Bernie bros"—the men who harass female Hillary supporters with patronizing, insulting, and sometimes-obscene tweets and posts—are just Internet will-o'-the-wisps. But if you want hard numbers, how about this: According to Gallup, 8 percent of people say they would never vote for a qualified woman for president. That's nearly one in 12 voters. But if one in 12 female primary voters is choosing Hillary *just* because she's a woman—and not also because she's experienced, super-smart, shares their values, and looks more likely to win the general—I would be surprised.

Twenty years ago, I was very critical of Hillary in this column, lambasting her book *It Takes a Village* for its namby-pamby, moralistic approach to poverty—and Hillary herself, for standing by while Bill Clinton was reforming welfare. Now I wonder why her book was the only politician's book I have ever written about—and she was just a first lady! And I ask myself why, given that welfare reform is being hurled at Hillary's supporters as sufficient reason to oppose her now, there's little pressure on Bernie to call for restoring those benefits?

On February 1, Hillary became the first woman in history to win the Iowa primary. The media barely noticed that. Maybe I'll go back to voting for men when women are 51 percent of the government. ■

(continued from page 8)

*tic, or how they can fetishize me. I don't want to put up with that in a relationship, but I fear that my insistence on respecting my own boundaries and not wanting to put up with folks' anti-blackness has doomed me to be forever alone. The other hard part of this is that, for the moment, I don't make a living wage and currently live with a parent. Even if a person initially expresses interest in me, once they learn this, it's the ultimate deal-breaker. It's been a crash course in the privileges you need to have to make a relationship possible. When I was younger, I believed that being in love meant people would try and sacrifice for one another, regardless of the obstacles. News flash: not true—especially in New York City. Even if I do change these circumstances, are there people out there who earnestly want to date a woke black woman? Is it even possible?*

—Woke Black Woman

Dear Woke Black Woman,

**R**acism and sexism will complicate your search for romance, but people absolutely do want to date you. It's frustrating that anyone reacts this way to your living situation. Capitalism isn't just an economic system; it's also an ideology that leads us (wrongly) to judge others by how much money they make and shapes our definition of adulthood—if a person doesn't have her own place, we assume she isn't mature, which is bullshit. But you aren't alone; so many of your generation are struggling financially. Try to find others in the same boat. Solidarity is not only critical to our survival, but it's also an excellent basis for romance.

Actually, I'd say the same for your political dilemma: You feel very alone, but you're not. Gonzalo Bacigalupe, a professor of counseling psychology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, wonders: "Does she feel that no one shares her politics?" In fact, Woke Black Woman, you live in New York City, where plenty of people do—and they're also black, recent immigrants, and share many other experiences with you. Political activism—immigrant-rights groups, as well

as Black Lives Matter, which attract many diverse, feminist radicals your age—could help. Not only might you find political comrades, but also, as Bacigalupe puts it, "other young people who are struggling with the same things." And you might well find better prospects in the streets than on Tinder.

Consciousness can feel burdensome, but it provides a useful asshole filter, protecting you from falling for someone who doesn't see you as a full human being. Yet you also have to be willing to have necessary conversations. Don't dismiss others too quickly or be too harsh on their imperfections. It's common these days to hear young social-justice-minded people say, "I'm not here to educate you," but this attitude is as unhelpful in relationships as it is in politics; we all *do* need to educate one another. Also, people fall in love all the time across the lines of race, class, and—most common, yet hardly a walk in the park (see previous letter)—gender. It helps, Bacigalupe says, if couples are able to see bigotry as a force located outside the relationship. If one of you says something racially insensitive, for example, it's less helpful to label that person a racist than to think of racism as, in Bacigalupe's words, "something that takes over the couple." Then ask yourselves: How can we fight this together? ■

(continued from page 5)

The truth is that a political revolution, if it's to have any potential to transform the government and the economy, must involve more than a progressive presidential candidate and a handful of prominent senators. Teachout is right when she says that "Congress is broken." But it goes beyond that: *Politics* is broken. It won't be repaired by business-as-usual politicians, but rather by candidates whose electoral engagement arises less from personal ambition than from shared struggles and a deep involvement with movements and ideas. Every election is a competition for power, and when activists compete for and secure power in order to advance the greater good, that's when politics can become transformative. JOHN NICHOLS

Breakthrough technology converts phone calls to captions.

No  
Contract  
No  
Monthly Fee

# New amplified phone lets you hear AND see the conversation.

**The Transcriber™ Captioning Telephone converts phone conversations to easy-to-read captions for individuals with hearing loss.**

Do you get discouraged when you hear your telephone ring? Do you avoid using your phone because hearing difficulties make it hard to understand the person on the other end of the line? For many Americans the telephone conversation – once an important part of everyday life – has become a thing of the past. Because they can't understand what is said to them on the phone, they're often cut off from friends, family, doctors and caregivers. Now, thanks to innovative technology there is finally a better way.

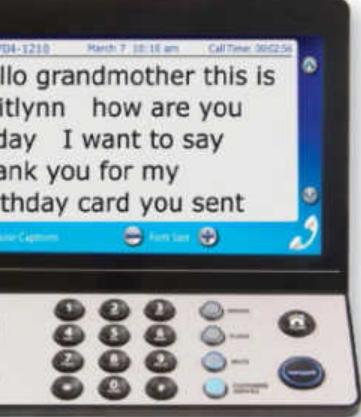
## A simple idea... made possible with sophisticated technology.

If you have trouble understanding a call, the Transcriber™ Captioning Telephone can change your life. During a phone call the words spoken to you appear on the phone's screen – similar to closed captioning on TV. So when you make or receive a call, the words spoken to you are not only amplified by the phone, but scroll across the phone so you can listen while reading everything that's said to you. Each call is routed through a call center, where computer technology – aided by a live representative – generates immediate voice-to-text translations. The captioning is real-time, accurate and readable. Your conversation is private and the captioning service doesn't cost you a penny. Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) is regulated and funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is designed exclusively for individuals with hearing loss. In order to use CTS in your home, you must have standard telephone

service and high-speed Internet connectivity where the phone will be used. Callers do not need special equipment or a captioning phone in order to speak with you.



**Finally... a phone you can use again.** The Transcriber™ Captioning Telephone is also packed with features to help make phone calls easier. The keypad has large, easy to use buttons. You get adjustable volume amplification along with the ability to save captions for review later. It even has an answering machine that provides you with the captions of each message.



**"For years I avoided phone calls because I couldn't understand the caller... now I don't miss a thing!"**

See for yourself with our exclusive home trial. Try the Transcriber™ Captioning Telephone in your own home and if you are not completely amazed, simply return it within 60-days for a refund of the product purchase price. It even comes with a 5-year warranty.

## **Transcriber™ Captioning Phone**

**Call now for our special introductory price!**

Call now Toll-Free

**1-877-476-4402**

Please mention promotion code 102427.

The Transcribe™ Captioning Telephone is intended for use by people with hearing loss. In purchasing a Captioning Telephone, you acknowledge that it will be used by someone who cannot hear well over a traditional phone.

IS THAT A GLOCK IN  
YOUR POCKET ...

## A Burthen



## of Dildos

**June 13, 2015**

Texas Governor Greg Abbott signs Senate Bill 11, the so-called "campus-carry" law.

**October 7, 2015**

*The Daily Texan* reports that economics professor emeritus Daniel Hamermesh will withdraw from his teaching position at the University of Texas at Austin when the bill goes into effect, citing classroom-safety concerns.

**December 10, 2015**

A 19-member working group established by UT-Austin president Greg Fenves recommends that guns be banned in various locations, including residence halls, some campus laboratories, and counseling and medical facilities.

**January 25, 2016**

Steven Weinberg, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist and UT-Austin professor, announces at a faculty council meeting that he will ban guns from his classroom.

**August 1, 2016**

SB 11 will go into effect at all four-year state colleges and universities in Texas.

**August 24, 2016**

Students at UT-Austin organize the Campus (Dildo) Carry event. Hundreds of students will strap the sex toys to their backpacks to protest the campus-carry law, noting that the dildo seemingly breaks a university rule against obscenity. The protesters have gained a social-media following with the hashtag #CocksNotGlocks.

**August 1, 2017**

The campus-carry law will go into effect at all junior and two-year state colleges as well.

—Jessica Corbett

# Patricia J. Williams



## Ban Guns, Not Tongues

*Government at home and abroad has some odd ideas about safety.*

**P**rior restraint" used to be a fairly well-defined concept, particularly in the area of First Amendment jurisprudence. It was generally accepted that we don't punish ideas—what someone reads or says or thinks—unless they threaten to depart the realm of mere ideas, becoming a "clear and present danger." There are two significant forces converging to compromise that settled law, both in the United States and abroad. The first is the rise of fear about terrorism across the globe. The second is the enormously complex communicative power of the Internet.

Many of us in the legal academy have spent the last few decades of the so-called culture wars debating the definition of "dangerous speech" in the traditional media and the new forms of social media. Those debates have largely been focused on books like *Mein Kampf*, or voices like those of Cliven and Ammon Bundy, or suggestive images like Sarah Palin's rifle crosshairs over the faces of her political opponents. We have generally arrived at a sort of free-speech absolutism: Speech must be met with more speech. Threats of insurrection have always been met with more than easy bromides, however. But even so, it's startling to see how much the debate has changed recently. Harvard law professor Cass Sunstein, a former official in the Obama administration, has asked whether it's time to reject the "clear and present danger" standard in favor of one that suppresses "explicit or direct incitement to violence, even if no harm is imminent." University of Chicago law professor Eric Posner has gone much further, proposing a law that would make it illegal even to read websites that "glorify" the Islamic State or to share links to such sites.

Many of the restrictions now being proposed are directed specifically against the Islamic State—a threat less serious for being a "state" than a state of mind. Posner worries about the persuasive appeal of such sites to the "naïve." But how do we distinguish the naïve from those who wish to be informed about a major global phenomenon? Is danger less clear and present when the extremist ideas are Christian? Most importantly, who will be the gatekeepers to decide not just what's dangerous to publish, but who gets punished for reading it?

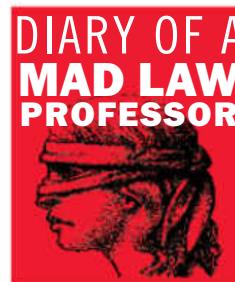
Many parts of Europe already deploy more

stringent regulations on incendiary speech. We may recall that, in the wake of the terrible *Charlie Hebdo* massacre, the French came together in one of the largest demonstrations in history dedicated to freedom of expression—but France has also long had some of most restrictive speech regulations in the industrialized world. Moreover, a new surveillance law in the country allows Internet monitoring, phone bugging, and secret break-ins for vaguely described reasons ranging from "organized delinquency" to "major foreign-policy interests." Administration of the law is overseen by a nine-person advisory committee, but the French prime minister has the ultimate decision-making power.

The current prime minister is Manuel Valls, whose stances against Muslims, migrants, trash-talking comedians, and Roma children have been controversial and divisive. He used to be mayor of the town of Évry; in that capacity, he was filmed by a news crew striding across the town plaza, where a pleasant-looking throng that included a number of black people had gathered. Valls, annoyed, complained that their presence detracted from the footage and called, in three languages, for white faces to be more prominent: "some *blancs*, some whites, some *blancos*."

Recently, Valls was scheduled to attend a meeting at the University of Avignon. In response, Bernard Mezzadri, a classics professor there, wrote his colleagues a mocking message in an internal e-mail: "I hope that upon this great occasion... there will be present sufficient numbers of 'blancos' (and not too many dark-skinned), so as not to project too bad a picture of our institution." The president of the university reported the message to the local constabulary. The prosecutor then pressed charges against Mezzadri for public incitement of racial "discrimination, hatred, or violence." The case has sparked widespread protest in France.

If this prosecution seems silly to some of us, it



*The question of threatening speech is more complicated in the US, where the right to bear arms has been deemed expressive.*

is because Mezzadri's message is so clearly sardonic. The gatekeepers seem to be exhibiting some fundamentalist tendencies of their own: Indeed, sociologist Éric Fassin has written that it seems almost like a resurrection of pre-revolutionary law, when charges of "blasphemy" could be brought against those who dared to mock the king.

Mezzadri's case is an object lesson in why "emergency" restraints in a time of "perpetual" emergency and "endless" war—whether France's laws or the dark, unexplained operations of our own USA Patriot Act—are rife with translational dangers, whether attributable to carelessness, ignorance, or abuse.

But the question of threatening speech is even more complicated in the United States, where the right to bear arms has been deemed expressive. Consider the situation of Steven Weinberg, a professor and Nobel Prize-winning physicist at the University of Texas at Austin.

He said he would close his seminars to anyone carrying a firearm, fearing that guns in the classroom would chill discussion. He is vulnerable to lawsuits under Texas's new "campus carry" law.

Meanwhile, there have been demonstrations on the Austin university grounds pitting campus carry against another Texas law that forbids individuals from displaying or distributing obscene materials. Thousands of students plan to come together to protest guns on campus by attaching "gigantic swinging dildos" to their backpacks. As organizer Jessica Jin points out, the dildos are "just about as effective at protecting us from sociopathic shooters, but much safer for recreational play." A veritable jouissance of expressive freedom may be found at #CocksNotGlocks. Have a look, before it's restrained a priori. In the effort to keep ourselves safe, it seems easier to think of tying tongues than prohibiting guns. ■

 **TWEET THAT!**

If you can't imagine Bernie Sanders as President, fine. But admit it's as likely your imagination is pathetic as that he's unimaginable.

**@JAMeyerson**, writer Jesse A. Myerson

**SNAPSHOT/KCNA**

## Kim Jong-un Looking at Things

North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un provides a little impromptu quality control at the Kim Jong-suk Textile Mill in Pyongyang. Kim is prone to inspecting goods produced by the state. His father's habit of doing the same gave rise to a viral Tumblr, Kim Jong-il Looking at Things, which was dedicated to showcasing the bizarre photo ops.

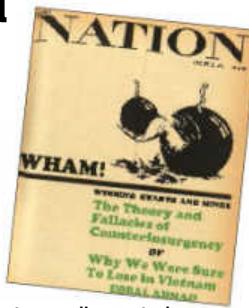


**BACK ISSUES/1971**

## The Revolution Will Not Be On Exhibit

In this issue, Barry Schwabsky, *The Nation's* art critic since 2009, reviews a new book of essays about Lawrence Alloway, *The Nation's* art critic from 1963 to 1971. In our August 2, 1971, issue, Alloway wrote about the Guggenheim Museum's last-minute decision not to exhibit a controversial piece by Hans Haacke titled *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System*. (It's now at the Whitney; Schwabsky and *Nation* architecture critic Michael Sorkin both discussed the piece in their reviews of the museum's new building, and in a subsequent exchange of letters, last year).

Alloway, a former Guggenheim curator, wrote of the museum's director, Thomas M. Messer: "[He] has decided that the Guggenheim is a citadel to be defended. He has forgot-



ten or discounted the existence of a fairly widespread distrust of museums among artists and revolutionary students (a part of the future museum audience). As museums embody norms of aesthetic quality they seem supportive of the *status quo*, covertly backing conservative values.... [Messer] chose merely to assert the rank of the museum rather than to demonstrate its versatility. His failure makes it harder for all of us seriously interested in working out the future role of museums in a society that is radically different from the one in which they were founded."

—Richard Kreitner

## IOWA: SWEET RELIEF

Calvin Trillin  
Deadline Poet

The pollsters now have all moved on.  
And café patrons needn't fear  
A candidate just might barge in  
To plead his case and smear a peer.  
  
And now it's safe to get the phone:  
One needn't fear a robocall.  
The rest of us for four more years  
Won't be discussing ethanol.



**Hillary Clinton**  
with supporters at  
a campaign stop in  
West Columbia.

---

by D.D. GUTTENPLAN

# SOUTH CAROLINA, IN BLACK AND WHITE

*The Republican and Democratic primaries are taking place in two parallel universes.*



**Donald Trump**  
greets his fans  
at the Westin  
Hilton Head Island  
Resort and Spa.

**T**HIS IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH RACE," SAYS RAY, a Tea Party activist explaining why he still resents Governor Nikki Haley's decision to remove the Confederate flag from the State Capitol grounds. One thing I learned early growing up in the South is that it is *always* about race. So I was not at all surprised when Ray, lest anyone misconstrue his concern with governmental overreach, elaborates: "If they can make us take down the Confederate flag today, they can make us take down all those statues of Martin Luther King tomorrow."

I spent a week in South Carolina in January, driving from the north coast to the Georgia border, and while I saw statues of John C. Calhoun (secessionist and slave owner), Wade Hampton (secessionist and slave owner), Ben Tillman (ardent segregationist), and Strom Thurmond (ditto), as well as memorials to Robert E. Lee and the Confederate war dead, I didn't see a single statue of King. So in reading what follows, the safest policy is to assume that whatever the topic, it is also, always, about race—especially when it isn't supposed to be.

South Carolina is a state built on denial and silence. Nobody tells you that the pristine wildlife sanctuaries scattered throughout the Lowcountry were once rice plantations whose earthen dikes and sluice gates were constructed using slave labor. Or that the Citadel—the state-funded military academy in Charleston, which boasts that its cadets "fired the first hostile shots of the Civil War"—gets its name from an arsenal built in response to a slave revolt led by Denmark Vesey, a carpenter who'd purchased his freedom after winning the lottery. Or that in 2015, more than 60 years after the *Brown* decision (which included a South Carolina case), segregation in the state's schools remains the rule rather than the exception.

And it's not just the schools. Walking down King Street in Charleston, you see very few black faces. There are parts of the city where the demographics would be reversed, but those are steadily shrinking under the pressure of gentrification, to the point that even Emanuel AME Church—Vesey was one of its founders; his son Robert rebuilt the church, which was razed after his father's trial and execution—is now surrounded by the city's expanding white middle class.

Yet in the cracked mirror of race, it is whites in South Carolina who say they are oppressed—beaten down by political correctness and the heavy hand of Washington. Only in a state where everyday reality remains separate and unequal would the refusal to expand Medicaid make political—if not economic or moral—sense. While the days of "colored" and "white" drinking fountains may be long gone, political party has become such a reliable proxy for race here that it may come as a shock to learn that the state's Republican junior senator, Tim Scott, is black. In 2013, Scott came to Myrtle Beach and told the Tea Partiers, "I know you're not racist.... It's the other side that plays favorites."

This year, there are actually two African Americans on the program at the Tea Party convention here: David Webb, the conservative talk-radio host, and Ben Carson. The audience is as white as this year's Oscar nominees. Politically, though, this turns out to be a surprisingly diverse group. The official program promises a beguiling panoply of swivel-eyed paranoia: "Tom DeWeese has built a career on conspiratorial warnings about Agenda 21.... Where

### South Carolina

others see sensible environmental guidelines, DeWeese finds sinister land-grabbing socialist UN initiatives."

Sometimes it delivers. "Every Chinese restaurant in the US is a sleeper cell for the Chinese government," warns Bill Cowan, a retired Marine officer and frequent Fox News commentator. He may have been joking. At times it's hard to tell, as when David Perdue—the former Reebok CEO who won election to the Senate from Georgia despite Tea Party opposition in the primary—cited the New Deal as an example of the dangers of a Democratic supermajority in Washington. Without the New Deal, most attendees of the Tea Party convention would still be waiting for rural electrification.

Though the speakers onstage sound like caricatures, the audience runs the gamut from debt-phobic libertarians to Christian Zionists. And while racial and class resentments often lurk just beneath the surface, the people I talk with are too polite to mention them. "It's the runaway growth in spending that really worries all of the people here," says Conway Ivy of Beaufort, South Carolina, who wants to see education back under control of the states, and the current federal income tax replaced by a flat tax.

His wife, Diane Ivy, says her main concern is "the erosion of our civil liberties" under the Obama administration. Her anger, however, seems mainly directed at her fellow Republicans. "The Republican Party leadership sold us out," she says. "John Boehner and Mitch McConnell would go ask Harry Reid what to do—even after 2014!"

"The candidates you have to vote for are the ones the Republican Party doesn't want," Diane Rufino tells me. A teacher, Rufino recently asked her class whether we have a moral obligation to resist unjust laws. Her text? Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." A Tea Party activist from North Carolina, Rufino describes herself as "dedicated to the work of Michael Boldin's Tenth Amendment Center." Boldin, who advocates the right of states to "nullify" federal laws, opposes Obamacare but frequently points to marijuana legalization and gay marriage as examples of the kind of state-level initiatives he supports. So I was curious to see what Rufino would make of the day's two featured speakers.

Ted Cruz is Donald Trump without the charm. He opens with a joke: "The Democratic field consists of a wild-eyed socialist—and Bernie Sanders." But soon he gets down to business: "How do we not get burned?" This is a movement crowd, and as Cruz repeatedly reminds them, he's been with them from the beginning, unlike a certain New York City billionaire. "We're Tea Party because we're fed up with bailing out Wall Street and ignoring Main Street. No bailouts for any banks, period."

Shifting his fire to Marco Rubio, Cruz declares: "Anyone who was AWOL on the battle of the Gang of Eight has no standing to say they will enforce the law." (Rubio was one of eight senators—four from the GOP—involved in drafting a comprehensive immigration-reform bill in 2013, which Cruz opposed.) The crowd cheers, and when he asks, "Are you fed up with Republicans nominating liberals for the Supreme Court?", they roar back in agreement.

But if Cruz is the boy next door made good, Trump



Denmark Vesey  
has been honored  
with a statue in  
Charleston's Hampton  
Park—one of the few  
public memorials to  
an African American.

### “The Republican Party leadership sold us out.”

—South Carolina  
voter Diane Ivy

D.D. Guttenplan  
is an editor-at-large with  
The Nation.

is still the leader of the pack. From his opening “How *are* you?” through his long, rambling, self-glorifying account of the construction of Central Park’s Wollman Skating Rink, Trump has the room hanging on his every word. Far from flattering his audience, he seems to delight in provoking them, turning a smug dismissal of Jeb Bush—“All he does is run for office and lose debates”—into a slap at the state’s senior Republican: “Lindsey [Graham] is going to give Bush all the people who voted for him. You know how many that is? Zero!”

The boos don’t come until he goes after Cruz: “Give money to Cruz, and you can get whatever you want.” When he complains that the Texan “didn’t report his bank loans, and then he acts like Robin Hood,” they boo even louder. But when Trump finishes, the crowd rushes the stage. Swain Shepard, a Rock Hill Tea Partier who took off his red “Ted Cruz—Courageous Conservative” T-shirt and replaced it with a white “Make America Great Again” Trump shirt, pronounces himself satisfied: “I like both. But I think the country needs someone like Trump.”

I ask Rufino why the crowd’s anger at Trump seemed so short-lived. Isn’t he a Johnny-come-lately? “Donald Trump is the creation of the Tea Party,” she replies. “And the Tea Party is a mind-set—that government is only supposed to do certain things. He gets that.” In the parking lot outside, two Southern ladies carrying Cruz signs are a little less forgiving: “Trump didn’t have to do that.” But when I ask if they’ll support Trump if he wins the nomination, both say they would.

**M**EANWHILE, BACK IN COLUMBIA TWO DAYS later, thousands of mostly black demonstrators gather to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday by demanding equal access to education at an NAACP rally. “We couldn’t celebrate [King] and the Confederacy,” Hillary Clinton tells the crowd. “We had to choose. South Carolina finally made the right choice.”

The speech is typical Clinton: fluent, flattering to both her and her audience, with plenty of shout-outs to local worthies; it even name-checks Bree Newsome, the activist who cut down the Confederate flag in the aftermath of the murders at Emanuel AME Church. As she had in the debate the night before, Clinton wraps herself tightly in President Obama’s mantle. She also reads from Dr. King’s last speech—the passage about how he’d been to the mountaintop and seen the promised land. Around her are signs advertising WOMEN FOR HILLARY and AFRICAN AMERICANS FOR HILLARY.

Lillie Hart isn’t impressed. “I don’t like being patronized,” she says. A lawyer from Columbia who’s supporting Sanders, Hart brought along her friend Maritha Frederick, a retired English teacher, who says that Clinton’s fame is also a burden. “She has some baggage,” Frederick adds. “There will be those who will resist her because of who she is.”

So far, the polls have shown little sign of that here, with the most recent CBS News poll—cited as evidence of a Sanders surge by his supporters—giving Clinton a 22-point lead in the state. Kevin Gray, who ran both of Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaigns in South Carolina, says

Sanders may simply have started too late: “If you’re going to run a progressive campaign, it takes more than one campaign season to organize. You have to have a track record of being with people.” Gray, who says he’ll probably vote for Sanders, points to the September funeral of Jackson’s mother, Helen Burns Jackson, as an instance of a long-term relationship. “Bill Clinton spoke at the funeral. There were pictures of Bill and Hillary in the program. A lot of people feel they owe her one.”

The Sanders supporters I’d seen in Charleston the night before had been mostly young and mostly white. So I was surprised to see such a mix of ages—and so many African Americans—among his supporters at the Capitol. Tracey Houston, a recent criminal-justice graduate from South University, says he thinks Sanders will do well among young black voters. “Bernie’s been working to help us for a long time,” he says. “And the way he talks about police violence—it shows he gets it.” Though Sanders delivers his standard stump speech, with no discernible local content—apart from asking the crowd what King would “say about a nation in which 29 million Americans have no health insurance”—his supporters cheer loudly.

The next morning, Chris Covert, the Sanders campaign’s state director, tells me his volunteers have knocked on 190,000 doors since August 1. Between the CBS poll and a South Carolina New Democrats poll showing a 19-point gap—down from 36 just a month ago—Covert declines to predict victory, but says “we have a chance here.”

Given Clinton’s decades-long history in the state, and her energetic courtship of African-American women, even that should be surprising. Sanders isn’t expected to win South Carolina, but as Covert admits: “We have to do well here to show the country that this is a candidate that can relate to the African-American community.”

The campaign may have started late, but even Gray allows that “the most activity I’ve encountered has been from the Sanders people.” In late January, Justin Bamberg, the state senator representing the family of Walter Scott, who was fatally shot by North Charleston police last year, announced that he was switching his support from Clinton to Sanders after meeting with the Vermont senator.

Gray says he’s more concerned with “how to be useful when this is over” than which candidate to vote for. Still, the ferment in a state that expected to be taken for granted has its uses. “We need to decide whether the Democratic

Party can be redeemed—and whether we can bring enough voters to the polls to make that happen,” says Gray. “We need to figure out how to apply pressure—locally—for things like redistricting.”

Covert argues that the Sanders campaign can be part of that. “Eighty percent of our volunteers have never volunteered before,” he says. “There’s a feeling that here is an opportunity that can’t be squandered. This isn’t just a homecoming for McGovern liberals—a lot of our

**“If you’re going to run a progressive campaign, it takes more than one campaign season to organize.”**

—political organizer  
Kevin Gray

**Bernie Sanders**  
speaks about  
inequality and racial  
justice to students at  
the historically black  
Benedict College.



volunteers were 10 or 12 years old when Obama was first elected. Their sense of what's possible is much bigger than yours or mine."

**I**T'S LIKE BEING IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE!" Larry Kobrovsky, chairman of the Charleston County Republican Party, is describing watching the Democratic presidential debate. "There are things in common," he says. "Primary voters like authenticity. They like candidates who fight for what they really believe in." But on a whole range of issues, from healthcare to immigration to the economy, the two parties are further apart than at any time that Kobrovsky, who grew up as a liberal in Allentown, Pennsylvania, can remember.

Kobrovsky is remaining neutral in the primary. The closest he comes to expressing a preference is commenting that "Kasich seems like he could get conservative things done"—while admitting the Ohio governor has little chance of winning. Instead, Kobrovsky is working hard to hold his party together, organizing debate-watch parties to keep disagreements friendly and preparing to back whomever the Republicans nominate.

Clinton, he says, will be a great unifier: "She's the Leona Helmsley of politics." As for her fellow New Yorker, "Donald Trump says things that people know are true, but are afraid to say. The news here showed his rally at the USS *Yorktown* on Pearl Harbor Day. They didn't show the 3,000 people waiting in the cold to get in. Nobody else has generated near that much grassroots enthusiasm."

Joe Semsar, a member of the South Carolina Young Republicans, reluctantly agrees with that assessment. A Clemson graduate who joined Teach for America and then worked as a recruiter for the group before becoming a management consultant, Semsar likes Marco Rubio—"primarily because I think he can win the general election." He argues that Trump's enthusiastic crowds may not translate into votes. "Trump promised a huge new wave of voters. Well, today is the last day to register in the GOP primary, and there's been no huge uptick in registered voters."

If Trump starts to win primaries, however, Semsar concedes that "people will coalesce around him.... The mainstream media on the conservative side has already started to shift in the way they talk about him. I was watching Hannity last night, and there were two or three people making the case for Trump."

The next day I meet Carl Mabry, who describes himself as "libertarian. Registered Republican." Mabry likes Carly Fiorina and Rand Paul, but practically he expects it to come down to "Trump or Cruz or Rubio. Trump is a braggart. He incites people. Cruz—he's oily, slick. Nobody could trust him. Rubio—he could beat Hillary Clinton. He's a little conservative for me, but I could take him over Hillary."

Earlier that day, I sat down with Paul Thurmond, whose father's statue stands just outside the State House. A state senator, Thurmond provided crucial support for the decision to take down the Confederate flag in a speech acknowledging that it was, indeed, all about race. "Our ancestors were literally fighting to continue to keep human beings as slaves, and continue the unimaginable acts



**Rev. David Kennedy**  
of Laurens cheers  
after Governor  
Nikki Haley signed  
a bill removing the  
Confederate flag from  
State Capitol grounds.

that occur when someone is held against their will. I am not proud of that heritage," said Thurmond, who shortly afterward announced he would not seek re-election. Thurmond endorsed Jeb Bush early on, and so far he's sticking with his choice. But to dismiss him as an establishment Republican is to overlook the man who also voted for the police to wear body cameras—"Though that was a Democrat idea, from my background as a prosecutor, I saw it as fair"—and who favors early voting and expanding ballot access. "The Republican philosophy is that people should be personally responsible. Opposing early voting is inconsistent with allowing people their choice," he says.

Though his father may have switched parties, Thurmond says he intends to remain a Republican. The more we talk, the more conservative he sounds. Yet when I ask if he sees any potential for common ground in a new administration, Thurmond doesn't hesitate. "The environment," he says. "If you talk about conservation, you could get a lot done. Even if you don't buy into global warming, we are trashing our world."

What he says next is even more surprising: "*Citizens United* is a real problem. A lot of Republicans just look at the surface. But where does it lead? How can we rein in such a flood of corporate money? I haven't seen a corporation go to jail yet."

**"Citizens  
United  
is a real  
problem.  
A lot of  
Republicans  
just look at  
the surface.  
But where  
does it  
lead?"**

—State Senator  
Paul Thurmond

**I** LEAVE THURMOND'S OFFICE WONDERING WHETHER what I've just heard can be real. He seemed like a sincere man, but he, too, was eager to get beyond race. "My generation has not been taught to hate people based on the color of their skin," the son of South Carolina's most notorious segregationist told me.

Yet someone taught Dylann Roof and Michael Slager, the cop who shot Walter Scott in the back. The Confederate flag may finally be on its way to a museum, but the attitude of racial arrogance that the flag represented is very far from being a mere artifact. That's a fundamental truth of our national life—though not one that's easy to see from Iowa or New Hampshire. Perhaps South Carolina's role in our politics is to remind us of all those parallel universes—not just Republican and Democratic, or rich and poor, but yes, still black and white—we work so hard to ignore. We always have a choice. We can carry on pretending that it's still morning in America, that we're all in this together. Or we can take a good hard look in the mirror. ■

# EXXON AND THE CLIMATE FIGHT AFTER PARIS

*For now at least,  
the momentum is  
on the side of climate-  
justice activists.*

---

by MARK HERTSGAARD



**T**HE DAWN OF 2016 IS NOT A HAPPY TIME TO BE an executive in the fossil-fuel industry. Like Gulliver, who awakens to find his limbs and trunk tied down by the tiny but industrious Lilliputians, the industry is under assault on many fronts at once, and it's not clear whether it can free itself.

Economically, the prices for oil, coal, and natural gas have been falling, even as production costs remain high. Industry stocks are tumbling, and small and large companies alike are going out of business. Arch Coal, one of the largest coal companies in the United States, declared

bankruptcy on January 11. Outside investors are wary or fleeing. Many are embracing solar and wind energy, drawn by plummeting costs that have driven stratospheric growth and market penetration worldwide.

The political terrain is no more favorable. At the United Nations climate summit in Paris last December, virtually every nation on earth promised to all but eliminate the use of fossil fuels after 2050—to abandon oil, gas, and coal in favor of renewable energy. In the United States, one of the nation's most powerful legal authorities, New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, is investigating

whether ExxonMobil, the industry's alpha leader, committed fraud by lying to investors and the public for decades about climate change. Schneiderman's investigation and the Paris Agreement in turn exemplify a third threat: an increasingly aroused civil society, spearheaded by a climate-justice movement that continues to grow in size, impact, and global reach.

The fossil-fuel industry remains an immensely rich and politically powerful enterprise, and volatility has been a theme throughout its history. This particular episode may yet prove to be a passing storm. Depressed oil prices can also discourage investment in renewable energy and conservation alternatives. But ExxonMobil, Peabody Energy, and their fossil-fuel brethren at home and abroad appear to be in a fight for their lives. And for the moment, at least, the momentum is against them.

On January 15, US Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced a three-year moratorium on new coal-mining leases on publicly owned land, as well as a comprehensive review of the "environmental and public health impacts" of coal mining. This ranks as perhaps the strongest climate action the Obama administration has taken to date; publicly owned coal in Wyoming's Powder River Basin alone accounts for 10 percent of the country's annual greenhouse-gas emissions.

The world's other climate-change superpower did much the same, two weeks before Obama did. China will halt new coal-mine approvals for three years and close roughly 1,000 existing mines, the head of its National Energy Administration, Nur Bekri, announced on December 29. Together, China and the United States are responsible for about 60 percent of global coal consumption. Their rejection of coal is fresh evidence that the industry is "a dead man walkin'," as Kevin Parker, former head of global-asset management at Deutsche Bank, first noted back in 2011.

Momentum begets momentum. Pressure from civil society—from grassroots activists, state and local government leaders, educational and faith institutions, and enlightened business and financial leaders—was essential to reaching the rhetorically ambitious though functionally nonbinding Paris Agreement. Now that accord is giving fresh ammunition to civil society's efforts to keep most remaining fossil fuels in the ground, as scientists say is required to honor the Paris target of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level.

"The Paris Agreement, which has the support of virtually every nation on earth, is a clear and undeniable sign that the fossil-fuel industry is about to experience dramatic changes," Schneiderman told *The Nation*. "During this time of rapid transition in the energy economy, it's crucial that fossil-fuel companies tell the truth to the public and customers about the impacts of climate change on their business."

Telling the truth is not only crucial; it's the law. American firms must regularly disclose to investors and the public all material risks that could affect corporate operations and profitability. That will be a challenging if not self-defeating exercise for fossil-fuel companies in the post-Paris era. Telling the truth about Paris only figures to further spook already-nervous investors.

"There's now a very clear message that fossil-fuel use must be quickly and dramatically reduced," said an official involved with Schneiderman's investigation. "Companies must acknowledge that. If they disagree, they need to state why and explain in clear, practical terms what the implementation of the Paris Agreement means for their business and its future."

Even before Paris, Schneiderman's office forced Peabody Energy, the largest private-sector coal company in the world, down this path. "We reached a settlement with Peabody that requires them to restate their filings," Schneiderman said, "because they had misrepresented. They said there was no way to predict the effect of stricter climate policies on their business, when in fact they had retained a third-party consultant to evaluate that very question. That, to us, constitutes fraud. And it sets a very good precedent for the fossil-fuel industry as a whole."

Schneiderman emphasized that he didn't want to pre-judge his investigation of ExxonMobil and other fossil-fuel companies. But recent investigative articles in the *Los Angeles Times* and the online publication InsideClimate News described a pattern of behavior strikingly similar to Peabody's. Scientists at Exxon and another oil company began researching global warming in the 1970s. By the mid-1980s, they had repeatedly informed company management that burning oil, gas, and coal would raise global temperatures, bringing ruinous changes to food and water supplies and other essentials of civilization.

Publicly, however, ExxonMobil led the fight to discredit climate science and block policy responses. Since 1998, the company has spent at least \$29.9 million to fund PR groups, lobbying campaigns, and other efforts to portray man-made climate change as a "premise that...defies common sense," as Lee Raymond, Exxon-Mobil's former chairman and CEO, argued in a 1997 speech opposing the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty to limit greenhouse-gas emissions.

ExxonMobil spokesmen have vigorously rejected any suggestion that the company hid its climate research. Schneiderman's office said that ExxonMobil has cooperated with its investigation, turning over thousands of internal documents dating back to the late 1970s.

Schneiderman said that every elected official who wants to make real change must pursue both "transactional" and "transformational" politics. "Transactional means doing your best to get the best possible results right now," he explained, citing his office's efforts to push the Environmental Protection Agency to issue strong pollution regulations for power plants. "The transformational aspect of our work is dealing with the fact that in the US, a remarkable number of people think that scientists disagree about climate change.... We have to break down this wall of propaganda that has confused the public, raise public awareness, and cast some doubt on what's come out of industry."

"It's not going to happen with just one court case or one report," Schneiderman added. Transforming the larger political context "must be done collectively, with lots of people involved." However, Schneiderman doesn't expect most of his fellow attorneys general across the nation to join his investigation the way they did against Big Tobacco in the 1990s: Too many state governments are still dominated by climate deniers. But he does think that "some other states" will get involved, "and we'll get action from our federal counterparts." A big first step may already have occurred in the nation's most populous state. On January 20, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that California Attorney General Kamala Harris has launched her own investigation of ExxonMobil. ■



**“The fossil-fuel industry is about to experience dramatic changes.”**

—New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman

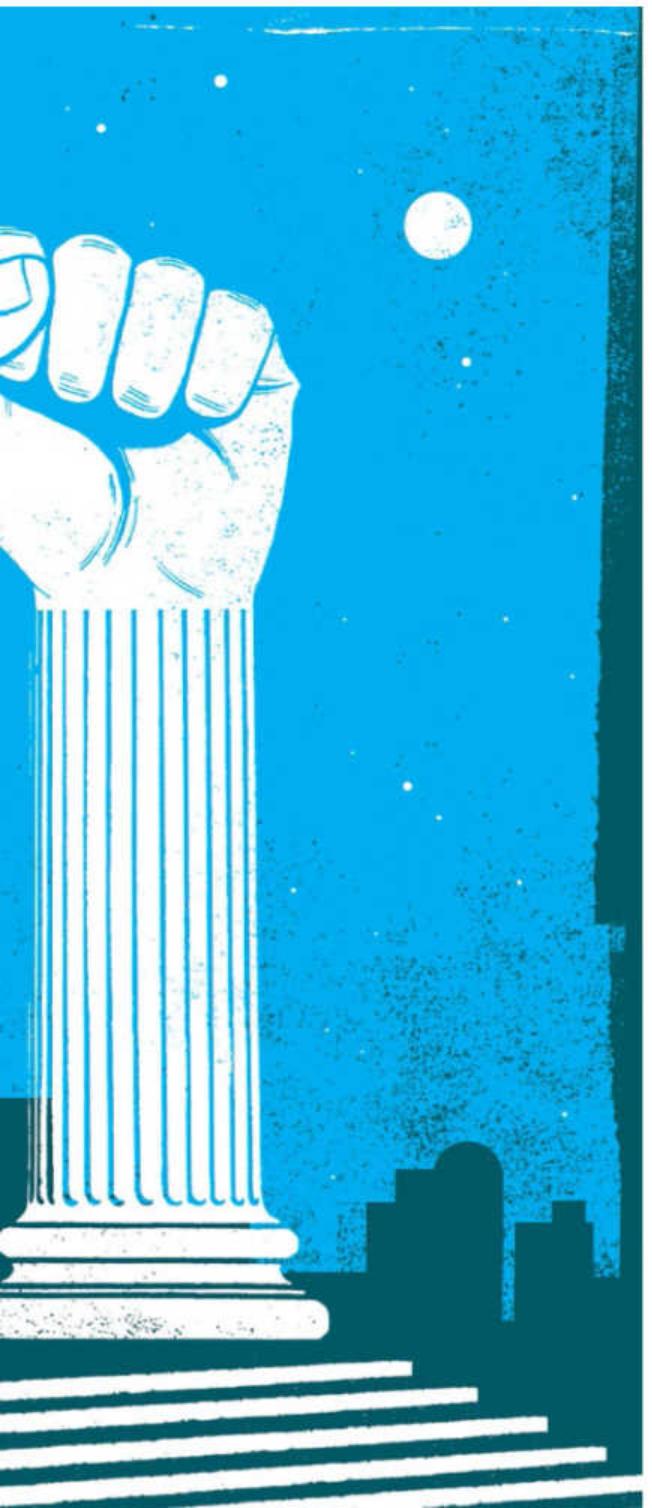
*Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation's environment correspondent and the author of HOT: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth, has been covering global climate summits since 1992.*

# RETHINKING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



**Progressive advocates are coming to realize that racial justice must be at the heart of democratic reform.**

by GARA LAMARCHE



**D**ESPITE THE resilient forces of reaction and repression—or perhaps largely because of them—we are living in the most vibrant period for social action since the 1960s. A critical turning point occurred just over four years ago, when Zuccotti Park and other public places across the country filled up with young people and others refusing to accept the mounting signs that our economy, culture, and politics are dominated by big corporations and the superrich—in an enduring phrase, the 1 percent. Joined and advanced since then by mainstream voices, from Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to Pope Francis, the national and international moment spotlighting income inequality owes much to the sense of urgency created by Occupy Wall Street. And the modest but significant gains we've seen in wages and working conditions owes everything to the courage and tenacity of those laborers—overwhelmingly immigrant women—who work in our nation's fast-food outlets and megastores and even our homes, where they care for our children and aging parents.

Another moment was forged by the Dreamers, those extraordinary sons and daughters of undocumented immigrants who put their lives on the line to call for an end to the federal government's increased deportations and forced disruption of their families. The long-overdue steps taken by President Obama to help bring these lives out of the shadows—since bogged down in courts and by an implacable nativist opposition—would never have been possible without the bravery of these young activists. By the same token, when women at colleges nationwide stood up to shame campus authorities for the shoddy treatment of rape victims, policies began to change.

And, of course, we're living in a moment when Americans have finally begun to acknowledge the institutionalized racism of our na-

tion's police forces, which has produced a steady torrent of black victims: Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Laquan McDonald, and far too many others. These fellow citizens were jumped, choked, hanged, or riddled with bullets while selling cigarettes on the sidewalk, or using an ATM, or driving down the highway full of hope for a new job—in short, for working and living while black. The exhausting, routinized, unfathomable outrage of it all cannot be contained a second longer.

For some years, there were two strains of civic engagement that didn't always work well together, and race was a factor. One strain emphasized process, the other rights; one had its roots in political science, the other in social movements. I don't want to overstate these differences, but they've been persistent and often, in my view, costly to our shared goal of advancing a more inclusive and truly representative democracy.

My sense is that this has changed, and is changing still. In the wake of Ferguson and similar events in which we've seen the close interplay between political exclusion and violence, the distinction between criminal-justice reform and democratic reform simply can't be maintained any longer. For a democracy movement to be worthy of the name, it must recognize the fact that the criminal-justice system is a barrier to the full exercise of citizenship for many marginalized Americans.

**W**HILE I BELIEVE that building a more inclusive framework for civic engagement is an urgent priority for all Americans, the issue is also personal. I have held leadership positions in social-justice and philanthropy organizations for most of my adult life, and I have spent a good deal of that time trying to persuade predominantly white and male institutions to stand up for racial and gender justice. Over the years, I've had to confront the racist and sexist structures that have shaped me and grapple with my

own privilege while coming to grips with the institutional racism that has shaped each organization in which I have worked. I have not always succeeded, not in myself and not in the institutions.

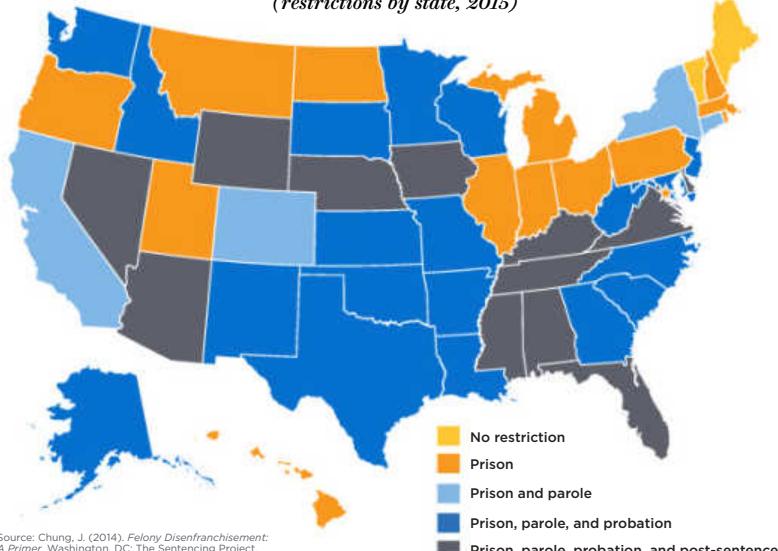
An example from about a decade ago may help to explain what I mean: I was working for George Soros at the time, heading his US programs, of which I had been the founding director. The Open Society Foundations were early and large funders in what is now widely recognized, even on the right, as the campaign to end mass incarceration. Remarkably, in the early days, the OSF did not focus on race in this area; we had a more technocratic, problem-solving perspective. But heavily influenced by the work of Michelle Alexander—whose seminal book, *The New Jim Crow*, was written with the support of a Soros Justice Fellowship—we eventually got there. While the OSF's criminal-justice strategy embraced many elements, I believe that the gains we made were fueled most effectively by our support for a burgeoning social movement of those most affected by the system: former prisoners and their families, and communities of color ravaged by the War on Drugs and oppressive policing.

The OSF was a leading funder not only of criminal-justice reform, but of democracy and civic engagement. At one point, Soros increased our US budget by \$25 million a year to focus on building a comprehensive legal, communications, and policy infrastructure. (The Democracy Alliance, a network of liberal donors I helped launch in 2005, has been doing much the same thing for over a decade.) I put together a small working group to plan the expenditure of those funds. Early on, our staffers insisted that it was important to include in these discussions the groups who'd been working so closely with us on criminal-justice reform.

I was resistant. Back then, criminal justice and drug policy were almost completely absent from the progressive conversation, and I couldn't see the connection. We missed a great opportunity to use our platform and con-

## Lock Up the Vote

*Here are the states that bar felons and ex-felons from voting  
(restrictions by state, 2015)*



siderable resources to change the debate.

We even supported work that explicitly connected mass incarceration and democracy, and I still didn't get it. We made a grant to Human Rights Watch and the Sentencing Project that enabled them to conduct research on the disenfranchisement of former prisoners. The results showed that as many as a third of the black men in at least three former Confederate states were permanently barred from voting as a result of their criminal records. For myself and many others, that study dramatized the impact of mass incarceration. I didn't begin to see the genuine challenge it posed for our democracy until the 2000 presidential election, when it became clear that if former prisoners had not been purged from the voting rolls, we would have been spared the ruinous presidency of George W. Bush. Elections, it is often said, have consequences. So does being blocked from elections.

Economist Brice Richard has written that disenfranchisement may have reduced public spending by as much as 18 percent: \$1.8 billion in public goods that would have flowed toward high-poverty communities and those with large black populations. Moreover, mass incarceration comes with not only societal but personal costs. The community organization Forward Together, working with partner groups, found that a person emerging from prison is also carrying, on average, nearly a year's worth of income in debt from fines and legal fees.

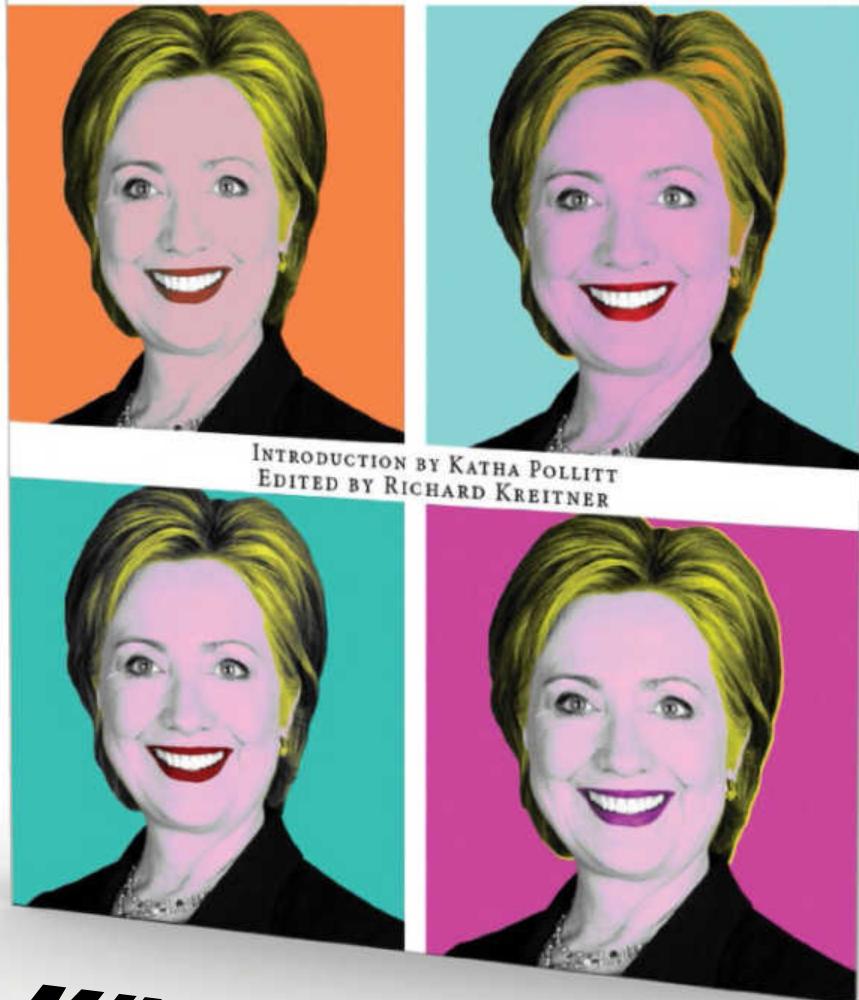
I'm excited to see that an increasing number of progressives have recognized that democracy reform isn't merely a technical issue, that racial exclusion has been baked into our system from the very beginning, and that strategies to make democracy work for everyone are doomed to fail unless racial exclusion is acknowledged and named.

Photo IDs for voting, for example, might sound sensible or at least unobjectionable in a racial vacuum. But to take just one stark example, the state of Alabama, which requires a photo ID to vote, recently announced a plan to stop issuing driver's licenses in counties where 75 percent of the registered voters are black. As unbelievable as that may sound, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency cited budget cuts as the reason why 31 of its satellite DMV offices would no longer have access to examiners, meaning that residents are forced to travel to other counties to apply for licenses. The move comes just one year after the state's photo-ID law went into effect. This outrage is of a piece with the closing of schools and public facilities in the 1950s and '60s to stymie integration, and for that matter with Texas's current efforts—which could very well be upheld by the Supreme Court this term—to end legal abortions by saddling clinics with draconian regulations and restrictions. It's a familiar story: What you can't ban outright, you stifle or kill through regulation and funding.

Advocates who adopt a broad approach to civic engagement are steadily narrowing this historic divide by insisting that racial issues are central to democracy reform. We can close the gap even further by insisting that the way the criminal-justice system works is a core democracy issue, and by remembering that not all tactics and strategies to advance democracy and spark social change involve the ballot box.

# *Who is* **HILLARY CLINTON?**

*Two Decades of Answers From the Left*



***A MUST-READ FOR THE  
2016 ELECTION SEASON***

**Nation.**  
150

➤ Available now in paperback & digital formats  
[THE NATION.COM/EBOOKS](http://THE NATION.COM/EBOOKS)

**I.B. TAURIS**  
PUBLISHERS



**O**UR FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT must make room for direct-action tactics and acknowledge the role they play in fostering a more responsive democracy. This means recognizing everything from Occupy Wall Street, the Dreamers' civil disobedience, and protests in the streets of Baltimore and Ferguson to the demand of Black Lives Matter activists to be heard at progressive forums.

Those of us who are the occasional allies and periodic targets of these approaches do not, should not, and cannot control them. But all of us do control our response to direct action and our reaction to disruption. To be told "this is not your time or place" by people who themselves were told the same thing for many years (and who are, in many places, still being told that) is toxic to the cross-movement solidarity that we must nurture.

My friend Pramila Jayapal, a longtime anti-racism activist now in the Washington State Senate, had just introduced Bernie Sanders and was standing next to him when his talk was disrupted in Seattle last summer. She had this to say about it afterward:

To build a movement, we have to be smarter than those who are trying to divide us. We have to take our anger and rage and channel it into building, growing, loving, holding each other up. We need our outlets too, our places of safety where we can say what we think without worrying about how it's going to land, where we can call out even our white loved ones, friends, allies for what they are not doing. But in the end, if we want to win for *all* of us on racial, economic, and social justice issues, we need multiple sets of tactics, working together. Some are disruptive tactics. Some are loving tactics. Some are truth-telling tactics. Some can only be taken on by white people. Some can only be taken on by people of color. Sometimes we need someone from the other strand to step in and hold us up. Other times, we have to step out and hold them up. Each of us has a different role to play but we all have to hold the collective space for movement building together. That's what I hope we all keep in mind and work on together. It's the only way we move forward.

**Disruptive power:**  
Black Lives Matter supporters gather at the Minneapolis City Hall on December 3, 2015, following the police-shooting death of Jamar Clark.

## Our framework for civic engagement must make room for direct-action tactics and embrace the concept of disruption.

*Gara LaMarche is the president of the Democracy Alliance.*

In the last several years, traditional progressive activists have reacted negatively to what they consider the failure of Occupy and Black Lives Matter activists to take a form they regard as familiar and effective. Among the questions we've heard: "Who are the leaders?" "What are their specific demands?" "Why don't they work through the system and mobilize for elections like the Tea Party does?"

If a movement doesn't emerge in a form that we easily recognize, the fault may be with us and not the movement. Moreover, the direct-action tactics of these groups have achieved at least as much impact as any other campaigns we've seen in recent years, electoral or otherwise. Administrative relief from deportation, body cameras on cops, the shift of the public discourse around the economy and policing—these are very real and tangible achievements, and they must not be minimized or discounted, even as longer-term campaigns and strategies develop.

**I**HAVE TRIED TO ARGUE THAT IT IS TIME TO rethink our notions of civic participation and engagement in order to address the criminal-justice system and the way it erodes or denies full citizenship to minorities, and also to acknowledge direct action as an important tool in the continuum of the democratic process.

Now I will offer just a bit of advice to those progressives who believe, as I do, that we need to rethink some basic premises. First, and most important, I think our analysis must be broader and more encompassing in the ways I've been suggesting.

Second, we all need to listen more to the voices emerging around us. At the Democracy Alliance—whose history, like that of many civic-engagement institutions, has been far from perfect where race and gender are concerned—we are bringing a race and gender perspective to our new priority areas of economic justice, democracy, and climate change. The logic is simple: If civic-engagement strategies don't take account of the urgent concerns of people of color, young people, women, and others who have been left out of the political process for many years, and if these groups don't have a place at every key decision-making table, how can those strategies possibly bring about the robust participation essential to progressive victories?

From the earliest days of the Republic, those who feared a democracy in which everyone fully participates have used myriad means to subvert that participation. We've been better at recognizing this when such forms of control are imposed at the registrar's office or the ballot box than when they occur on the streets and at the courthouse. This must change.

One way to bring about that change is to embrace the concept of disruption. In Silicon Valley, this is a buzzword referring to the value of shaking up businesses and market sectors to bring about a more productive economy. The civic-engagement sector should start to regard the kind of disruption I've been discussing in the same way.

Every definition of "democracy" I've ever seen stipulates a system of government in which power is vested in the people. We need to ensure that the ways in which the people challenge power and exert their own are reflected in the ways we think and talk about civic participation. ■

# Letters

@thenation.com

(continued from page 2)

endorsement, applauding what John Andrechak described as “a vote for hope!” in a fulsome online comment. “Let the river run, let the dreamers wake the nation! In this case, *The Nation* will help wake the nation!” he enthused.

For these readers, the magazine’s decision to support Sanders represented a victory for a progressive vision—for single-payer healthcare, international diplomacy, a \$15 minimum wage, and more. “Thank you for your endorsement of Senator Sanders, the only candidate running on either side willing to take the bold steps needed to put our government back in the hands of We The People,” wrote Jolen Quillen McCully in a Facebook post. Subhash Reddy thanked *The Nation* for displaying “the courage to live up to its avowed principles.”

Others, however, lamented the magazine’s choice. Michael L. Counts wrote to say that he could “no longer abide” the magazine’s “hypocrisy regarding women. Article after article about the double standard, equal pay for equal work, the glass ceiling, etc. Article after article extolling women leaders in many other nations.” And yet, he said, the magazine had decided to back the male candidate, bumping him “ahead of the woman even though she is more qualified.”

For many of *The Nation*’s disappointed readers, the problem boiled down to practicality: They welcomed Sanders’s vision but feared a reprise of George McGovern’s epic 1972 defeat. “Do you have a presidential-election death wish?” a reader named Jeff Price wanted to know.

Then there were those who argued that the magazine hadn’t been bold enough. “The

*Nation* should have endorsed the truly revolutionary candidate with a legitimate peace platform, Dr. Jill Stein of the Green Party,” Chip Masters wrote in a Facebook comment.

*The Nation* welcomes this conversation. While we have given our official blessing to Bernie Sanders, we continue to believe that animated debate can only be good for the Democratic Party, and for democracy, and we encourage readers to keep talking—to us and to each other. As inspiration, we offer the following incisive letters to the editor.

### The Conversation Continues

Progressives offer a strong critique of American foreign policy: what the United States does in the world, for whose benefit we do it, and how to assess the economic, human, and moral costs. Its influence can be felt when American policy shifts for the better—choosing the lives of HIV/AIDS patients over drug-company profits; repealing the “global gag rule” that denies women in developing countries access to reproductive healthcare; pushing for negotiations instead of war with Iran; ending a war in Iraq that the Iraqis did not want us to fight.

But Bernie Sanders isn’t offering a progressive critique of mainstream Democratic foreign policy. Neither his record nor his pronouncements suggest that it is a priority for him—or that he has given much thought to how he would lead American security and foreign-policy institutions.

Sanders is conspicuously missing from the group of senators who lead on progressive

foreign policy—often at high cost. Illinois’s Dick Durbin whipped votes for the Iran nuclear deal and supported relocating Guantánamo detainees to Illinois. Mark Udall of Colorado was a steadfast voice for civil liberties—and he lost his seat. Connecticut’s Chris Murphy has worked to build a progressive foreign-policy caucus, yet Sanders neither participated in it nor signed the group’s manifesto.

Nor does he vote like a leftist foreign-policy critic. Sanders opposes the most egregious defense-industry boondoggles—unless they are deployed in his state. When the Arab American Institute scored senators on “pro-Arab/pro-Palestinian” voting, Sanders got the same rating as Kirsten Gillibrand and Harry Reid—and scored lower than John Kerry and Pat Leahy.

His past press releases and TV appearances feature standard-issue internationalist talking points that might



surprise *The Nation*’s editorial board: “The entire world has got to stand up to Putin.” “I have supported US airstrikes against ISIS and believe they are authorized under current law.”

Yes, there are differences, but once you get past the 2002 Iraq vote, they’re surprisingly vague. He opposes the addition of new members to NATO but

doesn’t say what he thinks of the alliance itself. He opposes NATO’s intervention in Libya now, but acknowledges that he didn’t at the time.

What ought to have given *The Nation* pause is candidate Sanders’s apparent indifference. Rather than forward thinking on how to handle Libya, Sanders’s website offers a long disquisition on Kosovo. His very welcome message of inclusion for immigrants and refugees hasn’t been matched with any indication of how his administration would deal with the pleas for help of secular Syrian liberals—or besieged Central American governments. The left-liberal bench on foreign policy runs from retired diplomats and intelligence officers to eager millennials coming off experience abroad. Yet his campaign hasn’t named a single adviser or even conducted listening sessions, much less given a speech or laid out detailed policies. There’s just no evidence to support *The Nation*’s claim that Sanders’s approach to world affairs is “different, and better.” And given that the next president will face a Congress full of members who have endorsed the GOP candidates’ proposals for carpet-bombing, immigration bans, and torture, that’s a judgment that should matter to progressives a great deal.

HEATHER HURLBURT  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

For a discussion of the candidates’ foreign-policy platforms, listen to Hurlburt and Nation editor in chief Katrina vanden Heuvel on WNYC’s The Brian Lehrer Show on January 29.

You’ve described Bernie Sanders perfectly, concisely, and eloquently. He has packed more activism and accomplishments into his life than most of us could aspire to. I started underlining critical passages in your editorial but

# The Nation.

**EDITOR & PUBLISHER:** Katrina vanden Heuvel

**PRESIDENT:** Teresa Stack

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR:** Richard Kim

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Roane Carey

**LITERARY EDITOR:** John Palattella

**FEATURES EDITOR:** Kai Wright

**SENIOR EDITORS:** Emily Douglas, Sarah Leonard, Lizzy Ratner

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR:** Robert Best

**COPY DIRECTOR:** Rick Szkowny

**DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR:** Kate Murphy

**ASSISTANT LITERARY EDITOR:** Matthew McKnight

**ASSISTANT EDITOR, SPECIAL PROJECTS:** Richard Kreitner

**COPY CHIEF:** Matthew Grace

**COPY EDITOR:** Bonnie Huie

**ASSISTANT COPY EDITOR:** Polly Watson

**COPY ASSOCIATE:** Lisa Vandepaele

**MULTIMEDIA EDITOR:** Francis Reynolds

**ENGAGEMENT EDITOR:** Annie Shields

**ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR:** Ricky D'Ambrose

**INTERNS:** Joyce Chu, Jessica Corbett, Anakwa Dwamena, Alex Lubben, Sam Metz, Natalie M. Pattillo, Karl-Raphael Blanchard (*Design*), Annie Zhang (*Design*)

**WASHINGTON EDITOR:** George Zornick; **ASSOCIATE EDITOR:** Zoë Carpenter

**NATIONAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENTS:** William Greider, John Nichols, Joan Walsh

**EDITORS AT LARGE:** D.D. Guttenplan, Christopher Hayes

**COLUMNISTS:** Eric Alterman, Naomi Klein (*on leave*), Katha Pollitt, Patricia J. Williams, Gary Younge

**DEPARTMENTS:** *Architecture*, Michael Sorkin; *Art*, Barry Schwabsky; *Defense*, Michael T. Klare; *Environment*, Mark Hertsgaard; *Films*, Stuart Klawans; *Legal Affairs*, David Cole; *Music*, David Hajdu; *Poetry*, Ange Mlinko; *Sex*, JoAnn Wypijewski; *Sports*, Dave Zirin; *United Nations*, Barbara Crossette; *Deadline Poet*, Calvin Trillin

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:** Kai Bird, Robert L. Borosage, Stephen F. Cohen, Marc Cooper, Mike Davis, Slavenka Drakulic, Bob Dreyfuss, Susan Faludi, Thomas Ferguson, Melissa Harris-Perry, Doug Henwood, Max Holland, Richard Lingeman, Michael Moore, Christian Parenti, Eyal Press, Joel Rogers, Karen Rothmyer, Jeremy Scahill, Robert Scheer, Herman Schwartz, Bruce Shapiro, Edward Sorel, Jessica Valenti, Jon Wiener, Amy Wilentz, Art Winslow

**SENIOR CONTRIBUTING WRITER:** Ari Berman

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:** James Carden, Michelle Chen, William Deresiewicz, Laura Flanders, Julianne Hing, Dani McClain, Scott Sherman, Mychal Denzel Smith

**BUREAUS:** *London*, Maria Margaronis; *Southern Africa*, Mark Gevisser

**EDITORIAL BOARD:** Deepak Bhargava, Norman Birnbaum, Barbara Ehrenreich, Richard Falk, Frances FitzGerald, Eric Foner, Greg Grandin, Philip Green, Lani Guinier, Tom Hayden, Ilyse Hogue, Tony Kushner, Elinor Langer, Malia Lazu, Deborah W. Meier, Toni Morrison, Walter Mosley, Victor Navasky, Pedro Antonio Noguera, Richard Parker, Michael Pertschuk, Elizabeth Pochoda, Marcus G. Raskin, Andrea Batista Schlesinger, Dorian T. Warren, David Weir, Roger Wilkins

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, SPECIAL PROJECTS/WEBSITE:** Peter Rothberg

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, CIRCULATION & DEVELOPMENT:** Art Stupar

**DIRECTOR OF FINANCE:** Mary van Valkenburg

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, AD SALES:** Tim Johnson

**VICE PRESIDENT, ADVERTISING:** Ellen Bollinger

**CIRCULATION/AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER:** Nicole Chantharaj

**VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCTION/MARKETING SERVICES:** Omar Rubio

**PRODUCER/WEB COPY EDITOR:** Sandy McCroskey

**PRODUCTION COORDINATOR:** Mel Gray

**HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR:** Lana Gilbert

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, LEADERSHIP GIVING:** Tom Schloegel

**DIRECTOR, NATION BUILDERS:** Tricia Reyes

**MANAGER, NATION BUILDERS:** Loren Lynch

**DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE:** Kelsea Norris

**VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS:** Caitlin Graf

**CIRCULATION FULFILLMENT COORDINATOR:** Vivian Gómez

**DIRECTOR, DIGITAL PRODUCTS:** John W. Cary

**DIGITAL PRODUCTS MANAGER:** Joshua Leeman

**TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR:** Jason Brown

**ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT:** Alexandra Climciuc

**ASSISTANT TO VICTOR NAVASKY:** Mary Taylor Schilling

**ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT:** Kathleen Thomas

**DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER:** Sarah Arnold

**RECEPTIONIST/AD TRAFFICKER:** Vanessa Dunstan

**ADVERTISING ASSISTANT:** Kit Gross

**ACADEMIC LIAISON:** Charles Bittner

**PUBLISHER EMERITUS:** Victor Navasky

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:** E-mail to [letters@thenation.com](mailto:letters@thenation.com) (300-word limit). Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. **SUBMISSIONS:** Queries only, no manuscripts. Go to [TheNation.com](http://TheNation.com) and click on "about," then "submissions" for a query form.

**INTERNET:** Selections from the current issue become available Thursday morning at [TheNation.com](http://TheNation.com). Printed on 100% recycled 40% post-consumer acid- and chlorine-free paper, in the USA.

stopped when I realized I was underlining nearly everything. One quote, however, struck a special chord: "We must turn to each other, not on each other...and unite to change the corrupted politics that robs us all." This editorial helped put me over the top in deciding to support Bernie Sanders for president.

EVELYN FASANELLA  
NEW YORK CITY

Speaking as a *Nation* Builder, I was dismayed by your endorsement of Bernie Sanders. Yes, the progressive agenda will benefit from the national attention, but at the same time his nomination will take away from the ultimate prize: a Democrat winning the election. And that Democrat is Hillary Clinton, who can actually win and has the experience to do the job. This country is definitely not ready to elect a nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn who is also a socialist. This endorsement brings back painful memories of Ralph Nader, who also ran for president as a way of advancing his agenda to the national stage. And what did we get? George W. Bush. And Nader still asserts that it was Al Gore's fault for losing the election, exonerating himself of blame.

When we get Trump, or Cruz, or Rubio, who are you going to blame? LAURA GOLD  
NAPLES, FLA.

The schism between Sanders and Clinton reflects not simply divisions over policy and trustworthiness, but differences in strategies for change. A nonjudgmental foundation for fruitful discourse has been laid out by the metaphorical title of Isaiah Berlin's best-known essay, "The Hedgehog and the Fox."

Applied with some license, Sanders comes closest to being the Hedgehog: His vision is based upon an all-encompassing principle, from which springs virtually all of the progressive

change needed to return this country from moneyed oligarchy to citizen democracy.

Clinton more resembles the Fox: She avoids casting the country as fundamentally divided between the establishment and the grassroots. While Clinton echoes many of the progressive policy objectives that Sanders advocates, she doesn't disown the economic and political establishments. Instead, she promises ways to negotiate and deliver progressive objectives without replacing them. Her methodology implies the necessity for negotiation and compromise. One drawback of this approach is that she will only be able to achieve incremental improvements. On the other hand, given the powers of the establishment, Clinton argues, only incremental change is possible.

*The Nation* is absolutely right in endorsing what Sanders stands for and the reforms he proposes: They represent everything the magazine has stood for. If Sanders and Clinton had equal chances of achieving their respective goals, there would be no argument. But there are two issues, both of which are problematic. First, which candidate is most likely to be elected after winning the primaries? And second, which one is most likely to achieve his or her goals as president? Both have great strengths and great vulnerabilities.

When the competition began last year, Clinton's nomination seemed inevitable. Today, that seems problematic. Sanders has shown strength in organizing and attaining grassroots support. Hillary's known but unanticipated weaknesses have increased her vulnerability. As the nominating process now becomes real, the most likely result is an extended battle between the two.

This will be a critical time for dialogue among both *The Nation's* writers and readers.

MICHAEL PERTSCHUK  
SANTA FE, N.M.

# Books & the Arts.



Aaron Swartz in 2012.

DANIEL SIERADSKI

## A Serious Man

by AVA KOFMAN

**I**'d not really read much Kafka before and had grown up led to believe that it was a paranoid and hyperbolic work, dystopian fiction in the style of George Orwell," Aaron Swartz wrote of *The Trial* at the end of 2011. "Yet I read it and found it was precisely accurate—every single detail perfectly mirrored my own experience." Earlier that year, in January, Swartz had been arrested by police in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for downloading several million articles from JSTOR, a database of academic journals. Six months later, he was indicted on multiple felony counts by a federal grand jury.

At the time of his arrest, Swartz was a brilliant computer programmer, well-known activist, and prolific writer. He had helped to develop, among other projects, RSS, which syndicates news from across the Internet onto one reader; Reddit, a message board that allows users to curate the front page;

and SecureDrop, a platform for protecting anonymous leaks used by *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, and The Intercept, among others.

The government, his family later said, wanted to make an example out of him: The charges were extreme, the federal prosecutors overzealous. For downloading a small fraction of JSTOR's data—which remained unaltered on JSTOR's own servers—Swartz was charged with 11 violations of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act and two counts of wire fraud, for which the maximum penalty includes up to 50 years in prison, \$1 million in fines, restitution, and asset forfeiture. Whether Swartz intended to use the downloaded articles for his own research or to distribute them to other people remains unclear.

In retrospect, the aggressive prosecution was, as Swartz wrote of Kafka's novel, "a vivid illustration that bureaucracies, once they get started, continue doing whatever mindless thing they've been set up to do, regardless of whether the people in them particularly want to do it or whether it's even a good idea."

### The Boy Who Could Change the World

*The Writings of Aaron Swartz.*

By Aaron Swartz.

Introduced by Lawrence Lessig.  
New Press. 368 pp. Paper \$17.95.

Swartz committed suicide in his Brooklyn apartment two years after his arrest and weeks before his trial. He was 26 years old.

His thoughts on Kafka appeared in his annual "Review of Books," an annotated list of the books he had read. Swartz averaged about 100 books each year, but in 2011, he noted, he had read less than usual because it had been "a stressful year, in many ways." Titles bolded on that year's list of 70 volumes—among them *The Lean Startup* and *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*—were "those that were so great my heart leaps at the chance to tell you about them even now." This enthusiasm—intimate, casual, urgent—animated each of the posts on his blog, which he kept regularly from the age of 15 until his death.

Ava Kofman is a writer based in Brooklyn.

A suicide invites those in its wake to read the life lost as a trail of clues, whose mystery, if only deciphered sooner, might have led to a different resolution. It is tempting, and not difficult, to comb the 1,478 posts that Swartz published on his personal blog for signs and warnings. *The Boy Who Could Change the World*, an edited collection of these writings from Swartz's blog and elsewhere, largely avoids this temptation.

Introduced by Swartz's friends, mentors, and collaborators, the selections seem to suggest that the capacious vivacity of his life—of any life, really—might collapse if read too closely in the service of its overdetermined ending. The collection sidesteps Swartz's personal posts about depression, romantic crushes, and existential frustrations in favor of his arguments about copyright law, political corruption, transparency, and the soul-crushing structure of the educational system.

Each entry in *The Boy Who Could Change the World* notes not just the date and URL of the post, but also Swartz's age at the time of its composition—a marker that, like the book's title, broadcasts his precocity and our loss. But revisiting Swartz's writing is important not just for its unrealized promise, accurate premonitions, or boyish genius, but also for its earnest, restless, and contradictory reflections. There was nothing impersonal about the way that Swartz challenged himself and his readers to reconsider their beliefs—which is why, despite its selective focus, the book's curated tour of Swartz's legacy reads less like a posthumous time capsule and more like the record of one mind thinking, beautifully, against itself.

**P**art of the strangeness of reading a blog is the immediacy of the author's voice. Swartz's was often charming but firm, confident but kind, a voice particularly well suited to blogging. His curiosity led him to produce a staggering amount of opinions on a range of topics, from why he hated classical music to the politics of drug-policy reform. His programming projects emerged from his thinking on how to make accessing and sharing information not just easier or faster but more equitable. In blogging, these impulses could be channeled as medium and message.

By its nature, a blog is provisional, in progress, protean. Swartz's own ideas were likewise always in formation, but he thought they were best achieved through conversation, experimentation, and self-education. "I don't consider this writing, I consider this thinking," he wrote about blogging in a 2006 post. "I like sharing my thoughts and I like hearing

yours and I like practicing expressing ideas, but fundamentally this blog is not for you, it's for me. I hope that you enjoy it anyway."

Swartz was committed to democratizing information. On his blog, he proposed alternate systems for the compulsory licensing of music—ones that rerouted earnings to the artists themselves. In his free time, he wrote scripts to make the deep web, which is not indexed by conventional search engines, visible to non-programmers. "One of the most striking things about blogs to me is how they almost never talk down to their readership," he reflected in a post praising the advent of new media. "Indeed most seem to think higher of their readership than they do [of] themselves."

Swartz knew that the choices of programmers were "political choices, not technical ones"; that software functioned to make "certain kinds of features possible" and obscured others. He questioned whether the complicated features of even a relatively benevolent platform like Wikipedia might privilege the actions of some users over others. To a certain extent, he anticipated the criticism of social media's invisible, seemingly neutral design features, which often serve to curtail user privacy.

Swartz was fascinated by why certain platforms succeeded and others didn't. When he was 12, he developed an award-winning website with a premise similar to that of Wikipedia, but he did not develop Wikipedia. He was frustrated by the inefficiency of both NGOs and political pollsters, neither of whom spent enough time, in his opinion, measuring the outcomes of their expensive efforts. As a result, his favorite charity was GiveWell, a nonprofit that evaluates and recommends charities according to their cost-effectiveness. "To learn what works and what doesn't," he urged, "we need to share our experiences and be willing to test new things—new goals, new social structures, new software."

What would a left-leaning technology policy look like? If code were law, what kind of laws should be written? Swartz was trying to figure this out—not through blogging or analytic philosophy, but by helping to craft open standards for the web. As a tween, he collaborated with leading lawyers and programmers on the architecture of the Creative Commons (CC) licensing code, which permits the free circulation of works with attribution. His ultimate goal in developing successful projects was not to boost an IPO, but rather to maximize—for lack of a better word—human freedom.

There was nothing idle or naive about Swartz's belief that technologies that trans-

formed our capacity to think, manipulate, and collectively act on the world could be both liberating and coercive. Freedom, for Swartz, didn't inevitably follow from the existence of the Internet; it needed to be considered, designed, and maintained. And yet his own definition of "freedom" was foggy, perhaps best articulated by Isaiah Berlin's description of it as a word "so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist." This might explain why Swartz's commitment to the "freedom of information" was at once unwavering and fraught.

In the ambiguous terrain of digital reproduction, it was (and remains) unclear whether rights to a creation should lie with the consumer or the creator, with the user or the developer, with both, or with neither. On the one hand, Swartz advocated for free culture, a view that at times aligned him with libertarians. On the other, he was never anti-statist: Swartz was not, pace the Justice Department, an anarchic pirate calling for a revolution to overthrow all forms of authorship. Rather, he seems to have been searching for a middle ground. "You can't just punish people because they took away a potential sale," he explained in an interview in 2004. "Earthquakes take away potential sales, as do libraries and rental stores and negative reviews. Competitors also take away potential sales. So the question then becomes what's a reasonable form of taking away sales, and what's an unreasonable one." In an attempt to be reasonable, Swartz was, in some respects, an avatar for the seeming discrepancy at the crux of intellectual-property debates: Information wants to be free, but people also need to be paid.

Consider the contradictions of Creative Commons. Designed for the intensive climate of online content circulation, CC's licenses allow creators to keep their works open for use by others while ensuring that they receive attribution. At the same time, CC also contains licensing options that let authors ban derivative works, which replicates the commercial monopoly enshrined by traditional copyright. These restrictive provisions, critics contend, lead to a fragmented commons at the expense of an ethics of sharing that, as the Free Culture Foundation puts it, "takes away freedom from all cultural participants."

Reformist critiques notwithstanding, Swartz knew that "copyleft" solutions like Creative Commons could only go so far in their challenge to traditional IP so long as copyrights continued to be accumulated and policed by those who played no part in the works' creation. "The world's entire scientific and cultural heritage, published over



From the first *Nation* Cuba trip, June 2014

# JOIN *THE NATION* FOR A WEEK OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN HAVANA, CUBA!

April 23–30, 2016

THENATION.COM/CUBA



## THE JOURNEY

Travel to Havana and to Cuba's scenic Pinar del Río Province on this unique trip specially curated for *Nation* travelers. Immerse yourself in Cuban politics, culture, and history at private seminars, concerts, and performances, featuring prominent Cuban professors, government officials, health professionals, farmers, community activists, musicians, artists, and dancers. You will travel under *The Nation*'s OAFC people-to-people license, beginning your tour with a chartered flight from Tampa to Havana's historic José Martí International Airport on April 23, 2016, and returning on the 30th.

## THE DETAILS

The all-inclusive cost of this weeklong tour is \$5,585–\$5,990 per person (double/single occupancy) and includes round-trip chartered airfare from Tampa to Havana, six nights at the Hotel Capri, one evening at a private residence in Viñales, Cuban visas, all transportation within Cuba, tours, seminars, lectures, concerts, most of your meals, and many other captivating events and activities.

## YOUR HOSTS

### Peter Kornbluh



The longtime Cuba correspondent for *The Nation*, Peter Kornbluh, is Cuba analyst at the National Security Archive in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Bay of Pigs Declassified*, co-author of *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, and co-author of the recently published *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Cuba*, chosen by *Foreign Affairs* as Best Book of the Year.

### Charles Bittner



For almost two decades, Charles Bittner has served as *The Nation*'s academic liaison. He's hosted five previous *Nation* trips to Cuba and teaches in the sociology department at St. John's University.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ **Settle** into the historic, newly remodeled, four-star NH Hotel Capri La Habana, centrally located in a vibrant part of the Vedado district and its nearby jazz clubs and bohemian cafés.
- ▶ **Discuss** Cuban foreign policy and the coming changes with Carlos Alzugaray, former Cuban diplomat and expert on US-Cuba relations.
- ▶ **Enjoy** the beautiful Viñales Valley, stay in a private home for one night of dining and interaction with your Cuban host family, tour a bucolic private farm, and join the locals for their nightly fiesta in the town center.
- ▶ **Explore** La Habana Vieja, the oldest neighborhood in Havana, and discover Morro Castle, one of the oldest and most important Spanish forts anywhere in the Americas.
- ▶ **Visit** the Latin American Medical School, where Cuba trains thousands of doctors from all over the world, and the prestigious University of Havana for a private tour of the grounds and classrooms.
- ▶ **Attend** private music and dance performances all week long at venues throughout Cuba, and savor the tastes of traditional Cuban food at the island's finest restaurants and markets.
- ▶ **And** much more! See the full itinerary at [TheNation.com/Cuba](http://TheNation.com/Cuba).

**THE  
Nation.**  
150

SPACE IS VERY LIMITED — PLEASE REGISTER TODAY! ▶▶▶

For information or to register, contact Charles Bittner at [charles@thenation.com](mailto:charles@thenation.com) or 617-833-1435.

Travel on *The Nation*'s OFAC license #CT-2104-307579-1

Join the community of *Nation* travelers to Cuba on Facebook at “Cuba | *The Nation*”

centuries in books and journals, is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations,” states the “Guerilla Open Access Manifesto,” an anonymously written work that Swartz contributed to in 2008. “We can fight back. Those with access to these resources—students, librarians, scientists—you have been given a privilege. You get to feed at this banquet of knowledge while the rest of the world is locked out. But you need not—indeed, morally, you cannot—keep this privilege for yourselves. You have a duty to share it with the world.”

**R**unning throughout Swartz’s writing is an alternating current of self-aggrandizement and self-effacement. He was an optimist who believed that he could, in fact, save the world, but his pessimism ensured that no solution would be good enough. He was interested in so many things that many of them failed to hold his interest for very long.

Swartz wasn’t afraid to change his mind, and did so whenever he found it necessary. “My beliefs are much more shaken by converts—people who were strong believers in X but converted to believing in Y,” he wrote. His own fluency in conversion was rare and, to some, frustrating.

He often doubted whether he was working effectively, or even on the right problems. This was because he wanted to maximize his impact on promoting “the most overall good.” As he admitted in 2005:

The other night, when [redacted] asked me why I switched from computer science to sociology, I said it was because Computer Science was hard and I wasn’t really good at it, which really isn’t true at all. The real reason is because I want to save the world. Maybe I didn’t say that because it sounds sort of crazy.

While he continued to code, Swartz eventually veered away from programming, moving toward politics, public intellectualism, and teaching. In his essay “A Non-Programmer’s Apology,” he justified this decision in instrumentalist terms. “Any specific task I could do with the knowledge,” he wrote of his programming skills, “would be far outweighed by the tasks done by those I’d explained the knowledge to.” He wrote the essay, he explained, under the influence of David Foster Wallace’s discursive style.

Swartz read widely. He liked George Saunders, Matt Taibbi, and Chuck Klosterman. He railed against the neoliberal “immorality of *Freakonomics*.” He devoured best-selling self-

help books—works that made him “rethink the entire way [he] approached life”—as well as those pitched to businessmen and politicians, like *What It Takes: The Way to the White House*, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*, and *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. He was fascinated by the ruthless urban planner Robert Moses and his unyielding control of New York City, as depicted by Robert Caro in his celebrated biography *The Power Broker*.

When he was 17, Swartz read Noam Chomsky’s *Understanding Power*, a thick collection of lectures from the 1990s on globalization, the military-industrial complex, intellectualism, social movements, and the media’s “propaganda model.” “Reading the book, I felt as if my mind was rocked by explosions,” Swartz reported. “At times the ideas were too much, and I literally had to lie down.... I remember vividly clutching at the door to my room, trying to hold on to something while the world spun around.” After reading Chomsky, Swartz felt alone in his despair. He wrote that he didn’t know whether he could share his new worldview with friends; he didn’t want to sound obvious or paranoid. It took him two years, he said, to finally put to paper the “shocking brokenness I’d discovered.”

Reading often pushed him toward new revelations. On *Poor Economics*, a cautionary tale about how the good intentions of philanthropists and economists play out terribly in practice, he wrote: “It’s a stunning feeling to have the basic building blocks of your world crumbled and questioned before you—and a powerful lesson in the value of self-skepticism for everyone who’s trying to do something.”

One of Swartz’s clearest conversions can be found in his thinking on transparency. He initially believed that freeing information “could change the world,” that all that was needed for people to act was for them to know. When he was 17, he proposed the idea of a WikiCourt: a kind of high-school debating society, but online and editable. The idea was to ask a team of experts to weigh the evidence for and against a given statement—for example, “[Al] Gore claims to have invented the Internet”—and then decide its ultimate truth. At 21, Swartz launched Watchdog.net, which would provide searchable data sets on political contributions, demographics, lobbying, and voting records in order to “pull people into politics.” A kind of prototype for Change.org, the project’s first step was to post data about every elected representative and give people a way to write to them. At the time, Swartz hoped that the project would be “not so much a finished solution as a direction, where I hope

to figure more of it out along the way.” A year later, he had taken a more cynical turn.

“It’s hard to think of any good examples of transparency work accomplishing anything, except perhaps for more transparency,” he wrote in 2009. “Putting databases online isn’t a silver bullet, as nice as the word transparency may sound.” In the essay “When Is Transparency Useful?,” he argued that calls for greater transparency in politics only led to reforms that addressed the appearance of corruption rather than the thing itself. Dumping or leaking information was pointless, since bribes and dark money could always move out of transparency’s spotlight.

Swartz was disillusioned with the limits of existing structural reform, and he worried that the links in that process were not tightly connected to each other. Technologists and journalists both insisted that their work was neutral, with the former declaring that it was up to others to contextualize their data, and the latter never following up on the aftermath of their investigations. Meanwhile, the politicians ultimately tasked with cleaning up the corruption exposed were often too invested in the status quo to do so. The key to making information useful, Swartz thought, would be to purposefully dismantle the “arbitrary divisions between ‘technology’ and ‘journalism’ and ‘politics.’”

Because he criticized himself as intensely as he did others, Swartz came to the conclusion that his work as a programmer and a writer would not protect the political values he treasured without the force of legislation. He advised himself and other technologists to “stop passing the buck by saying our job is just to get the data out there and it’s other people’s job to figure out how to use it.” This is what led him to study the architecture of American power and to consider entering the formal domain of politics himself.

**S**avvier than most programmers turned do-gooders twice his age, Swartz understood the “naïveté” of the technocratic approach to politics. “Whenever geeks turn their eyes to politics,” he pointed out, “they always have the same reaction: There’s so much inefficiency!”

His goal in analyzing the pressure points of politics was not to make the existing system more frictionless but to allow groups of outside activists to change it efficiently. He co-founded the Progressive Change Campaign Committee and Demand Progress. He wrote papers and gave presentations on campaign finance and strategy, congressional casework, legislative gridlock, staff ethics, lobbying, the rise of the think tank, and the

attraction of centrism. His political analyses aren't particularly groundbreaking, but they do display a mind keen to understand politics as a system built on the all-too-human phenomena of power, corruption, and lies.

But Swartz had his own technocratic tendencies as well. He wanted to launch small campaigns with tight feedback loops to test out electoral strategies. At the same time, he was keen on *parpolity*, or "participatory polity"—a nesting structure that would make it possible for each citizen to have a face-to-face discussion with a direct representative. His participatory vision at times stood in contrast to his desire to redesign the system from scratch as he saw best: He wanted to change not just a district but also, as he put it, "the world."

In politics, as in programming, he was tempted to wonder about "elegant mathematical effectiveness." In an e-mail to a friend, the sci-fi writer Cory Doctorow, Swartz envisioned a strategy that would allow a passionate independent to get elected to national office. First, the candidate uses a "vote-finding machine" to ask all of his or her social-media friends for support. Each supporter is then asked to do the same with their contacts, and so on. The vote machine constantly deploys A/B testing to optimize its persuasive strategy. TV spots, web ads, and events are all likewise tested and optimized according to voters' GPS locations. The whole system is "built into a larger game/karma/points thing that makes it utterly addictive, with you always trying to stay one step ahead of your friends."

The campaign sounds a little bit like *The Manchurian Candidate* meets Candy Crush. But it's also reminiscent of Facebook's widely hated experiment in "digital gerrymandering," altering users' newsfeeds to successfully influence voter turnout. Swartz signed off his e-mail to Doctorow writing: "anyway, i could go on, but i should actually take a break and do some of this..." It's unclear if he was kidding.

One of Swartz's most successful efforts as an activist was his work with Demand Progress to help kill SOPA, the Stop Online Piracy Act, a bill that would have authorized Congress, using the framework of copyright law, to censor parts of the Internet. He told the story of these organizing efforts in a keynote speech delivered at the Freedom to Connect Conference in May 2012, printed in the collection. "There's a battle going on right now," he said, "a battle to define everything that happens on the Internet in terms of traditional things that the law understands." Despite the victory over SOPA, and anticipating the coming battle over net neutrality, Swartz warned his audience: "It will happen again. Sure, it will have yet another name, and maybe a

different excuse, and probably do its damage in a different way. But make no mistake: the enemies of the freedom to connect have not disappeared."

At the conclusion of his address, Swartz reflected on its form with a sort of political parable. He noted that he had chosen to narrate the events that led to SOPA's demise as a "personal story," one that he compared to the two-sided Hollywood structure of *Transformers*. "But that's kind of the point," he conceded. "We won this fight because everyone made themselves the hero of their own story. Everyone took it as their job to save this crucial freedom. They threw themselves into it. They did whatever they could think of to do. They didn't stop to ask anyone for permission."

His meta-commentary is telling: Swartz never stopped believing in the power of small groups of people to collaborate for change, but he also never stopped dreaming about leaving his own radically individual mark. It's one way to explain the oddity of both designing Creative Commons and hacking JSTOR. But if everyone makes themselves "the hero of their own story," as in *Transformers* or Swartz's beloved Batman trilogy or, indeed, *The Boy Who Could Change the World*, it becomes impossible to organize collectively, to orchestrate social movements, to struggle against the social injustices that blockbusters and databases are not designed to capture.

From an early age, Swartz learned to "just live his life without asking for permission," as he wrote of *The Trial's* Josef K. He left high school after ninth grade, college after one year, and the moneyed offices of Condé Nast, which purchased Reddit, in a matter of months. ("I couldn't stand San Francisco," he explained in a 2007 speech. "I couldn't stand office life. I couldn't stand *Wired*. I took a long Christmas vacation. I got sick. I thought of suicide. I ran from the police. And when I got back on Monday morning, I was asked to resign.") The criminal-justice system was simply the last of Swartz's encounters with a series of frustrating bureaucracies. It also happened to be the only bureaucracy from which he couldn't walk away.

Swartz saw himself like K: "an individual in a world of bureaucracies," fighting against impersonal, inefficient systems. He didn't want his contributions to be replaceable. This made it difficult for him—despite his stated commitment to collaboration, collective action, and free information—to exist within institutions designed to understand workers, students, or

collaborators as interchangeable. He urged managers to understand an organization as a "machine made of men and women," but he didn't want to be a cog in one himself.

Although Swartz circumvented traditional schooling, he took education—his own and that of others—seriously. He wanted to create structures in which everyone had a fair chance to be curious. Despite his distrust of bureaucrats and his faith in algorithms, he deeply believed in people and trusted their ability to disrupt the status quo. "Too often, people think of schools as systems for building good people," he wrote. "Perhaps it's time to think of them as places to let people be good."

Nor was Swartz interested in reforming a failing educational system through high-stakes testing and privatization, but rather by showing how the system itself had been set up to fail. After researching the history and philosophy of American education, Swartz concluded that the system was working exactly as it was intended to: inducing compliance and boredom in order to pre-empt future labor agitation, and teaching everyone very little in the process.

As an adolescent, Swartz subscribed to "unschooling," an educational philosophy based on the idea that "kids want to learn." When he blogged about his own adventures in unschooling, he addressed the clichéd question of how children would make friends if they didn't go to school by explaining the appeal of online communities. Proving his own point at the essay's end, he thanked the friends who had contributed to the online discussion from which his essay emerged.

This was the upside to Swartz's self-education. He thrived in the chat rooms and collaborations of the early Internet, where appearance, age, hierarchies, and social norms didn't matter. Compared with the inane rituals demanded of kids in a classroom, the "magic" he called coding must have seemed limitless.

The "downside," as his friend and Creative Commons collaborator Lawrence Lessig told *The New Republic*, was that Swartz "never had to...learn to live with the failings of bureaucracy. He was always just free to just walk away." According to friends and family, Swartz never did anything he did not want to do, including dishes. He told his girlfriend that he would rather spend his life couchsurfing than working an office job that he didn't want merely to pay the rent. In the case of his lawsuit, he didn't want to ask friends for money, didn't want to go to trial, didn't want to be labeled a felon.

To Swartz, walking away was the only way to get somewhere.

"I realize it must seem like the greatest arrogance to think one could escape life's mundane concerns, like asking to live on a cloud, floating above the mere mortals," Swartz reflected at 22, after taking a month-long vacation from the Internet. "But it was that arrogance that made me think I could contribute to adult mailing lists when I was

still in elementary school, that arrogance that made me think someone might want to read my website when I was still just a teen, that arrogance that had me start a company as a college freshman. That sort of arrogance—not bragging, but simply inwardly thinking I could do more than was expected of me—is the only thing that's gotten me anywhere in life." ■

## Barbed Absurdist Excess

by BEN EHRENREICH

I've been waiting for years for Vladimir Sorokin's second novel, *Norma* (The Norm), to appear in English translation. It wasn't published in the author's native Russia until 1994, a decade after Sorokin finished it, so perhaps there's hope yet. The book, by all accounts, is a series of vignettes linked by a moment in each when a character unwraps his or her ration of a substance called "the norm." It stinks and tastes awful. Children especially hate it, but they, like everyone else, swallow their daily dose. It's shit, of course, actual human excrement—a pungent symbol of the requisite humiliations of the Soviet system and, perhaps, of life in any oppressive collectivity. Ours included. A small chunk (of the novel, that is) appeared in the first issue of *n+1*, in Keith Gessen's translation: A character from the provinces visits the capital and marvels at the quality of the local norm. "It's so fresh... and soft," he enthuses. "Ours is all dried out."

*Norma*, regrettably, is not alone: Sorokin has written more than a dozen novels, and most of them are unavailable in English translation, even though he's been publishing in Russian since the old samizdat days and has been widely translated throughout Europe, Japan, and Korea. But the four books of his that have made it onto local shelves are radically diverse—including the *Ice Trilogy*, perhaps the strangest and most wonderful work of science fiction that this century has yet produced. The most recent among them is *The Blizzard*, published in Russia in 2010 and now available in a translation by Jamey Gambrell (who also translated *Ice* and *Day of the Oprichnik*, both released here in 2011). All four texts exhibit Sorokin's taste for barbed absurdist excess. Even his most sincere metaphysical explorations tend toward brutal deadpan satire, replete with cartoon-

### The Blizzard

By Vladimir Sorokin.

Translated by Jamey Gambrell.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 181 pp. Paper \$23.

ish extremes of violence, comically unsexy sex, and a Rabelaisian dollop of flatulence and scat. All of which would get old fast if Sorokin weren't such an extraordinary writer—a brash, Swiftian ventriloquist whose best work spars ably with the Russian greats of the last century and a half. His loyalties can be surprising, but usually he stands alongside naughty Sologub over earnest Solzhenitsyn, helping Gogol kick Tolstoy into a snowdrift, then tickling him while he's down.

Sorokin's gifts have not been universally appreciated. At home, he has long been tarred as a scandalmonger and, even worse, a postmodernist. In 2002, followers of a pro-Putin nationalist youth group constructed a giant papier-mâché toilet outside Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre and commenced to symbolically flush copies of Sorokin's 1999 novel *Blue Lard*. The offending work depicted an erotic encounter between a clone of Stalin and one of Khrushchev. The joke went badly—or, perhaps, very well indeed. The Moscow prosecutor's office investigated Sorokin for the "illegal distribution of pornographic materials." His international reputation soared. The charges were dropped.

Curiously, Sorokin has maintained in interviews that his work remained pointedly apolitical until he turned 50, which would have been three years after the *Blue Lard* affair. The novelist told *Der Spiegel* an almost surely spurious anecdote, once current in his circle of the avant-garde, that as Hitler's armies flooded the boulevards of Paris outside Picasso's studio, the great painter ignored them and focused on drawing an apple: "That was our attitude—you must sit there and draw your apple, no matter what happens around you." He may have meant it, but Sorokin's apple was a rotting, mutant

fruit that for all its grotesqueness reflected the distorted and frequently ridiculous realities of Soviet life more accurately than the official realism could manage. Being apolitical in Brezhnev's or Andropov's USSR meant something different than it did in the West of Reagan and Thatcher, or than it does in Putin's Russia. If political engagement involved submitting to communally approved narratives, the author of *Norma* wasn't willing to take a bite. It's no surprise that only later, after the dissolution of the Soviet state and the collective identity it had sustained for nearly a century—after, as Sorokin has it, "suddenly, everything, everything, turned to dust"—would the writer discover that "the citizen in me has come to life."

Looking back, *The Queue*, the only one of Sorokin's pre-glasnost works available in English, seems quite civic-minded by comparison. It may have felt raw and even rebellious when it was first published in 1985—in Paris, not Moscow—but it now reads as frankly tender. It's written entirely in unattributed dialogue, like listening in on a chattering crowd. Characters emerge from the chaos of voices, all of them waiting in one endless, snaking Moscow queue for shoes, or maybe leather jackets, or perhaps jeans. They gossip, argue, chat about sports and the news and the Beatles, count off, get drunk, fall asleep. (Ten blank pages stand in for a nap.) Some take breaks to dine or make love: 21 pages of blank postcoital slumber follow five of vowel-heavy moans. The queue, that "many-headed caterpillar," may have been the archetypal institution of Soviet life. It functioned, Sorokin explained in an afterword written in 2008, as a "quasi-surrogate for church," the social space in which "the collective body" was ritually formed, "pacified and disciplined," and rewarded with consumer goods and occasional orgiastic release. But the "many-headed caterpillar" is dead. Sorokin sounds almost mournful sometimes.

The sentiment doesn't linger long. If the collective body fell to pieces, as Sorokin suggests, when Boris Yeltsin dissolved the Supreme Soviet late in 1993, it's all the more ironic that the novelist brings back the figure of the many-headed caterpillar in *Day of the Oprichnik*. This is a very different world than that of *The Queue*, and a very different book—a vicious, dystopian romp set in the not-so-distant future. A hereditary monarchy has been restored and a high wall constructed to fence off Holy Russia "from the foreign without and the demon within." The taming of the latter is left to the resurrected *oprichnina*, an elite corps of loyal czarist thugs

established and later disbanded by Ivan the Terrible in the late 16th century. Sorokin's *oprichnik* narrator dresses the part in red boots and a gold-embroidered jacket trimmed with weasel fur, but he lives in a Russia that is not far off from Vladimir Putin's. The *oprichniki* snort cocaine and speed around town in bright-red "Mercedovs"—Western imports have been banned—adorned each morning with fresh dogs' heads for hood ornaments.

The plot unfolds over the course of a single day, and it's a busy one. Sorokin's *oprichnik* accepts bribes and fixes shady deals on behalf of the order, visits a soothsayer who warms herself over a pyre of Russian novels—Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky burn cleanly—and, when not otherwise engaged, cheerfully rapes and kills the enemies of His Majesty. The caterpillar comes late in the evening, when the *oprichnina* celebrate the monarch's announcement of a fresh purge with an exclusive, *oprichnik*-only orgy. They pop pills, then bond by buggering one another in a long, conjoined chain—their enormous, surgically modified members glowing bright—until, finally, "the caterpillar is ready. It's complete." But the night is young, and before they retire they play some more, assaulting one another with electric drills. Thus is the collective body reborn.

The *Ice Trilogy*, published in a single volume in English, could not have been more different. But then it's hard to think of any work to which *Ice* is similar. The premise, delivered deadpan, is that we are a gigantic, cosmic mistake ("we" meaning the earth and especially humans). So learns Bro, the eponymous narrator of the trilogy's first installment, on a 1927 expedition to find the Tungus meteorite, which fell in eastern Siberia on the day of his birth. The closer he gets to the impact site, the more crazed he gets, until he strips off his clothes, burns the expedition's barracks, and, setting off by himself, finds a giant hunk of celestial ice (henceforth, "the Ice") preserved beneath the permafrost. He slips, smashing his chest against it, and awakens to the Music of Eternal Harmony.

In a flash, Bro understands: "In the beginning there was only the Primordial Light," shining for itself in the void. In joyous harmony, the 23,000 rays comprising the Light created the stars and the heavenly bodies. But they made a mistake: On one planet, orbiting one star, they created water, which in its mutability introduced change into the timeless equilibrium. It made of the earth a mirror that reflected the 23,000 rays, trapping them as incarnate beings, "prisoners of the water and time." Developing "an enormous tumor called the brain," they evolved into humans, enslaved by language, growing



Vladimir Sorokin.

more and more cruel, devoted equally to self-propagation and mass destruction. "And the Earth turned into the ugliest place in the Universe." But Bro is just one of the 23,000 rays. If he can find and awaken the others—by smashing their chests with specially constructed Ice hammers—they can all clasp hands and fix their mistake, erasing the earth and restoring the universe to eternal, empty harmony.

What follows over nearly 700 pages is a history of the 20th century told via the growing Brotherhood of the Light's mission to distinguish its still-unawakened members from the discardable "meat machines" who populate the earth (which is to say, the rest of us). Like sublimely creepy cultists, the blond and blue-eyed brothers and sisters of the Light insert themselves into positions of

power in the Cheka, precursor to the KGB, and later the Nazi SS, the Mafia, and the corporate elite. More disturbing than any of the violence he depicts—and there's a lot of it—is that Sorokin makes it nearly impossible for a reader not to ambivalently identify with the brotherhood's goals. Only toward the end does he allow any of the meat machines a voice. In all their coldest longings for a final stillness, Bro and his brethren's urges are familiar, even intimately held, and basic to every attempt, secular or religious, to escape the pain-filled dynamism and chaos of earthly life: Surely this was all a mistake?

But *Ice*'s premise allows Sorokin, with a chilly alien eye for human foibles, to trace out the intricate historical ironies that embroider the tragedies of the last hundred



Join  
Victor Navasky  
Katrina vanden Heuvel  
Dave Zirin  
&  
John Nichols

for *The Nation's* Post-Election Cruise

SAVE THE DATE

DEC.

9-16  
2016

7-night

Western Caribbean  
cruise aboard  
Holland America's  
MS *Oosterdam*.

Departing from  
Tampa, Florida, and  
cruising to

Key West  
Florida

Mahogany Bay  
Roatan Island, Honduras  
Santo Tomás de Castilla  
Guatemala  
Costa Maya  
Mexico

years. Here we are, dumb clumps of flesh, exposed in all our baseness. There's no parsing out the good bits, no clever scheme that might render us fully good or kind or pure. He leaves us no choice but to swallow the entire package—either uncertainty, fragility, and radical imperfection, or a metaphysics of utter nihilism craving release. The key to the endeavor is Sorokin's unblinking dryness, his near-absolute refusal of any sentiment that might give away his loyalties. They are mixed, I suspect, but mainly fall with the meat.

**T**he *Blizzard* is set in a more securely human universe, back in the familiar realm of parable. Still, the void is never far. A doctor sets out on an urgent journey in the middle of a snowstorm. The plot has deep roots in the Russian canon: Pushkin wrote a short story that hinged on a character getting lost in a blizzard; Tolstoy published two. Chekhov wrote one about a doctor riding through a storm to see a patient; further to the west, with more hallucinatory angst than sober melancholy, so did Kafka. But then a blizzard in the days of travel by horse cart was likely a memorable event. The familiar world is suddenly annihilated; the horizon disappears, and the sky, and the posts marking the road. In Pushkin's version, the snow concealed fate's caprices: A groom fails to make it to the altar and another man takes his place. For Tolstoy, a blizzard was an opportunity for atonement: A greedy merchant discovers the spiritual power of altruism, then dies. One of the most famous poems by the symbolist Alexander Blok, whose lines provide Sorokin with an epigraph, followed suit: The swirling snow blinds us to history even as we create it, and to the Messiah, trudging along just out of sight. Chekhov's doctor, watching "white dust that filled all visible space," isn't convinced: "What kind of moral sense can you draw from all this?" he wonders. "That there's a blizzard, nothing else."

Structurally, if not philosophically, Sorokin's *The Blizzard* is closest to Tolstoy's story "Master and Man," which it echoes with a savage delight. The district doctor, Platon Illich Garin—his initials spell out the English word "pig"—is nearer kin to Tolstoy's merchant than to any of Chekhov's careworn humanists. He's arrogant, impatient, sporadically abusive. Crouper, the driver he hires to bring him and the precious vaccine he carries to the village of Dolgoye, where an epidemic has broken out, is another recognizable Tolstoyan type: the simple, stoically good-hearted peasant, resigned to every fate. He is Russia in oversize mittens and old felt boots. But Russia doesn't always fare that well. In Tolstoy's story,

the driver was a cuckold. Sorokin's Crouper is kind but impotent, and far from bright.

Much of *The Blizzard* will be recognizable from old novels: the pince-nez worn by Garin, icons and samovars, a warm berth above the stove, distances measured in versts. But this is Sorokin. Anachrony reigns. Relics of Russia's past mix with a fantastical future, and both stand in for a cruel, uncertain present. The "Red Troubles" and the "distant Stalin era" are long gone, but their language lingers, and not that alone. "The lives of honest workers are in danger," Garin says, urging on a hesitant Crouper. "This is an affair of state." Although we never see it head-on, as in *Day of the Oprichnik*, Sorokin hints at a re-established czardom. They can't turn back, Garin goes on, because "it wouldn't be Russian. And it wouldn't be Christian"—as if those two conditions are once again synonymous. The miller's house, where they spend a night, is lit by lanterns, "a portrait of the sovereign on the wall." An archaic double-barreled pistol hangs from moose antlers beside a Kalashnikov. The "radio," concealed beneath a cozy, is in a fact a hologram projector, but as in the old days, it transmits just three dreary state-run channels.

Sorokin metes out the foreseeable with the absurd, the banal with the fantastic. Gasoline has become a luxury unaffordable to all but a few, so Garin must travel by sleigh. Yet horses are hard to come by in a snowstorm, so he ends up with Crouper's team of 50 "little horses," each one "no bigger than a partridge." They all fit beneath the bonnet of his carved and painted "sled-mobile." There are "big horses" too, three stories high, and "little men," like the foul-tempered miller, who is no bigger than the vodka bottle from which his wife nurses him, pouring shots into a thimble as he clammers up her breast. Late in the book, Crouper's sleigh hits a drift and one of its runners lodges deep in the nose of a giant who, drunk, passed out in the snow and froze where he fell. "Russia..." mutters Garin in disgust.

Again and again, the doctor and his driver lose their way. They ride in circles, veer off into gullies, get caught in drifts. A runner breaks and needs repairing and breaks off yet again. The snow keeps falling and the wind screaming, but Garin's task can't wait. The epidemic, we slowly learn, is a nasty Bolivian strain of plague that turns the infected into mole-like zombies capable of tunneling through the frozen earth in search of human prey. "Mole-Paw Syndrome" is the technical term, and the urgency of his mission boosts Garin's already bloated self-importance. But the night is long, and men and horses of all sizes need to rest. They run into a band of

nomadic Kazakh drug dealers who shelter themselves in tents of living felt. Garin accepts a taste of their "latest product," a weightless, translucent pyramid that induces hallucinations when heated—in Garin's case, of being boiled alive in a cauldron of sunflower oil as the townspeople cheer his helpless cries. "Brilliant!" he enthuses, and buys two for the road.

No idols are spared: Garin is left reeling in an ecstasy that recalls—and mocks—Dostoyevsky at his most mystical. "All people are brothers," the doctor tells a bewildered Crouper. "What a miracle is life!" he goes on. "The Creator gave us all of this, gave it to us unselfishly.... He doesn't ask anything of us in return for this sky, these snowflakes, this field!" The rapture lasts until their sleigh gets stuck again

(another gully), and the little horses catch scent of wolves and become too frightened to proceed. Garin tries to whip them, slugs Crouper, loses hope. "Our life is nothing but a pile of shit," he concludes, then breaks out the rubbing alcohol for a drink.

I won't tell you how the voyage ends, except that they don't make it to Dolgoye. Tolstoy and Blok would have both been let down. No savior hides in this blizzard, nor any non-narcotic path to redemption. There's only "the snow, the endless snow," and Russia yawning on. It's not a void, exactly; it's not so pure as that. Wandering off alone, maddened by cold and despair, Garin comes across an enormous snowman, two stories high, with cobblestones for eyes. A frost-packed tree trunk protrudes from its middle, "a huge, erect phallus of snow." ■

campaign) not even that. By the 20th anniversary of Rabin's murder, members of the religious right were in powerful cabinet positions, illegal settlements were burgeoning, and the prime minister had publicly sworn that the Palestinians would remain stateless so long as he was in office. Yigal Amir had gotten everything he'd wanted, short of the Messiah.

To understand how the assassin was handed this success, you cannot limit yourself to compiling a disheartening list of events. You also have to get under the skin of people's attitudes and beliefs and comprehend why the Israelis responded to the unfolding events as they did. It's more than you can expect to learn from any one film, however thoughtful and complex. But maybe you can get somewhere by watching two new films: Amos Gitai's *Rabin, the Last Day*, and Joseph Dorman and Oren Rudavsky's *Colliding Dreams*.

The first, in characteristic Gitai fashion, is a politically outspoken but formally disjunctive work that doesn't pretend to be a documentary, despite being based on piles of official documents. It's more like a kaleidoscopic essay that juxtaposes "actualities footage," sober re-enactments, and moments of outright playacting, often blurring the lines among them. The second film is a much more straightforward project, which blends wide-ranging interviews, archival images, and voice-over narration into a smooth historical account. Gitai plunges you intensely into one brief period, from the weeks of agitation leading up to the assassination through the end of the ensuing investigation. Dorman and Rudavsky take a panoramic view of Zionism as a whole, sweeping from the Pale of Settlement in the 1880s to today's Israeli settlements in 135 minutes. Neither film explicitly asks why the peace movement collapsed after Rabin's assassination; but taken together, the two might advance you toward an answer.

*Rabin, the Last Day* opens with a prologue that serves as both advertisement and warning for the experience to follow. An interview that Gitai recently conducted with former Israeli president Shimon Peres gives way to news footage of the November 4 rally and then to a re-creation of the video that captured the assassination, the latter images jumping without transition into a dramatization of the action inside Rabin's car, with a bodyguard frantically compressing the prime minister's chest and blood spouting everywhere. You see very quickly the different materials Gitai will use; you prepare to be wrenching from a helicopter shot to a claustrophobic close-up, from measured conversation to frenzied shouting, from fact to not-quite-fiction. As if this weren't enough to pull you in, and at the same time



A scene from *Rabin, the Last Day*.

## Short of the Messiah

by STUART KLAWANS

**I**t was the most politically effective assassination in modern history. On November 4, 1995, a young man named Yigal Amir, steeped in the messianic zeal of Israel's religious right and the settler movement, killed Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, punctuating with three gunshots the aftermath of a mass rally in Tel Aviv. The central square had overflowed that evening with joyous supporters of Rabin's policy of exchanging occupied territories for peace with the Palestinians—a policy that was literally anathema to Amir and others in his camp. In the weeks before the attack, they had chanted furiously in the streets for the death of the "traitor" prime minister, parading with a coffin bearing an

effigy of Rabin dressed as a Nazi. You might have imagined, in the days after the murder, that a large portion of the Israeli public would recoil from this virulent rejectionism, which Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud party had not merely countenanced but helped to incite. Israel's internal violence had been exposed; the peace movement that Rabin had animated, and for which he was now a martyr, would surely gain strength. Yet the rejectionists were not rejected.

The very next year, Netanyahu was elected prime minister. The Israeli left slowly withered, and so did the negotiations with the Palestinians, which after 2001 came to receive only lip service and then (in Netanyahu's 2015

knock you back on your heels, Gitai follows this opening sequence with a second prologue, acted out on a gloomy set of uncertain, dreamlike dimensions. Three elder statesmen pore over documents, the actual video of the assassination plays repeatedly on a screen, and two lawyers for the commission of inquiry take testimony from the man who recorded the images. The camera travels slowly across this imagined scene and then glides back again, covering a lot of ground but, like the inquiry itself, getting nowhere.

By now you might already be exhausted—but Gitai is just getting started. Moving into the core of his film, he cuts back and forth between re-enactments of the commission hearings and dramatizations of the lives of Yigal Amir (Yogev Yefet) and others on the Israeli far right. You see scenes of scruffy young settlers setting up a trailer near Hebron and later being dragged away by Rabin's army; an ultra-Orthodox group conducting a ceremony to curse Rabin; a psychologist delivering her diagnosis—absolutely unquestionable—that Rabin, God help us, is schizophrenic and utterly cut off from reality; a rabbi, charged with the education of Amir, darkly instructing his pupil to study a passage of the Talmud concerned with justifiable homicide and then draw his own conclusions. Speaking at the screening of *Rabin, the Last Day* at the 2016 New York Jewish Film Festival, Gitai praised the restraint of his actors' performances; but in the scenes depicting the right-wingers, his judgment can be understood only within the normative range of Israeli behavior. The subtle actors do everything short of tearing out their hair while banging their heads on the furniture.

The only performers who seem self-possessed to American eyes play the commissioners heading the inquiry and their legal counsel—and even they have a heated moment, when the lawyers argue that the occupation's effects are relevant to the investigation, and the commissioners refuse to consider evidence on that subject. Their body, the commissioners insist, is authorized to examine nothing but the role of the security forces and the police—to determine, for example, how the gunman had been allowed to linger unmolested near the prime minister's car for 40 minutes. Any nonoperational matters are out of bounds.

With that ruling, you come to the crux of Gitai's argument in *Rabin, the Last Day* and also to an explanation for his method: The inquiry, in his view, deliberately split the how from the why, the crime from the community in whose interests the criminal acted. The film's fragmentation imitates that rupture.

There is precedent for this procedure,

in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*—and although it's unfair to compare any film to that masterpiece, I think Gitai is admirable for following its tradition of critical, investigative moviemaking in his own rough-and-ready style. At once immediate and distanced in method, dramatic and discursive, his film confronts you with evidence of a widespread, willful blindness in Israeli society that may be even more troubling today than it was in 1995.

What Gitai cannot do, given his relatively tight focus on the investigation, is to put that willful blindness into historical context. For that, you have to turn to Dorman and Rudavsky and their *Colliding Dreams*.

It's as good a feature-length history of Zionism as we're likely to get: judicious, sophisticated, attentive to a range of viewpoints (both Israeli and Palestinian, as the title suggests), and free from teleology. Among the interview subjects are a few people—representative types—who believe that God created Zionism to return the Jews to their promised land, or that European colonial powers invented Zionism to dispossess the Palestinians; but the majority of the speakers, like the filmmakers themselves, understand that nobody was in charge of the developments that led to the State of Israel, nor did anyone foresee all of the consequences.

Which is not to say that the historical process, undirected and indeterminate, has relieved the Israelis of moral burdens, or made the Palestinians' reality more acceptable.

Here, though, is how it happened, starting from the time when the majority of the world's Jews, living as a people apart in multi-ethnic European empires, had no territory they could claim as their own and little hope of being accepted by the nationalist groups rising around them. Even before the advent of Theodor Herzl and the project for a Jewish state, Jews were fleeing to Ottoman Palestine, a place with which they felt an ancestral bond, and where they believed they could throw off their humiliation and subservience like an outworn caftan and emerge as a free people. As Kobi Sharett, the son of a former prime minister, recalls for the camera, an early Zionist delegation reported that the land was like a beautiful young woman, endowed with everything you could desire. The only problem, the report added, was that she was already engaged. Or as the activist and journalist Orly Noy puts it more harshly, the Jews jumped out of a burning building and onto somebody's head.

You hear from some of the people who've been jumped on: academics and political figures including Hanan Ashrawi, Sari Nusseibeh, Khalil Shikaki, Saman Khoury, and Said Zeedani, as well as various unnamed

Palestinians interviewed in West Bank cafés. You also hear from Jewish Israelis, such as the historian Gadi Taub, whose forebears came to Palestine despite everything, for the unchallengeable reason that they simply had nowhere else to go.

Where *Colliding Dreams* excels is in tracing the ideologies, ideals, aspirations, and fantasies that these Jews brought to their place of refuge and developed over time. A fascination with biblical archeology helped their imaginations leap backward over rabbinic Judaism, and centuries of living in Europe, to an ancient time and a mythical kinship with the land. An early period of mingling comfortably with their Arab neighbors, sharing in their communal life and adopting their ways, enabled the new arrivals to ignore that they were starting to push sharecroppers out of their homes. In the words of the political scientist and former Jerusalem deputy mayor Meron Benvenisti, this economic displacement was "peaceful violence" but violence nonetheless. And many of the Zionists, caught up in their struggle for existence, could not permit themselves to see it.

Out of everything that might be learned from *Colliding Dreams*—and there's a lot—perhaps the most useful lesson is that Israel's willful blindness dates back at least a century. You spot it at the source in Dorman and Rudavsky's film, sense the gathering strength of its current, follow its widening course through generations. And in Gitai's film, you watch its floodwaters wash away any possibility of a public accounting for the murder of a head of state. Why did the peace movement collapse and the left wither? Because too many Israelis—and not just on the right—were used to ignoring what was in front of their eyes. Gitai, Dorman, and Rudavsky make you look.

**R**ide along, if you will, through the rustic 19th-century world of Radu Jude's *Aferim!*, a place that is nostalgically welcoming for moviegoers who long for wide-screen black-and-white entertainment, but less reassuring for those who contemplate the worldview of its main character, Costandin. Played by the veteran Romanian actor Teodor Corban, he is a Wallachian constable—which is as much as to say, a bounty hunter—with a handlebar mustache, embroidered jacket, and iron-lunged bluster. Costandin endlessly bullies (or, in his mind, instructs) his reedy son and apprentice Ionita (Mihai Comanou), extorts bribes on all sides, swills booze, frequents prostitutes, deprecates everyone he encounters (to their faces if they're peasants, behind their backs if they're not), and likes to reminisce about

the best times he ever knew: when he was a soldier and killed left and right.

The tale of the pursuit of a runaway slave (Toma Cuzin)—one of the Roma, commonly and dismissively called “crows,” who were held as property by the landowners and monks of Wallachia—*Aferim!* is a landscape film of gorgeous variety, which sends Costandin and Ionita riding through mountains, fields, and forests, and a folkloric romp of increasingly grisly tone. The terrain that Costandin and Ionita must negotiate is an obstacle course of stony roads and impass-

able waterways, the social structure a maze of feudal possessions, and the mentalities a poisonous web spun of spite and ignorance. At first, these low thoughts are so outlandish, and their thinkers so outspoken, that you can laugh at them, as when a priest—one of the film’s better-educated characters—improves Costandin’s journey by cataloging for him the different inherent vices of all the peoples of Europe. By the time you get to a market, where the bounty hunters catch the cruelest Punch and Judy show you’ve ever seen, the pervasive brutality is no longer so funny.

At the climax, when the slave Carfin falls back into his owner’s hands, the violence becomes unspeakable and yet is accepted by everyone—except, it seems, by Costandin, who voices the most tentative and subservient of demurrals before going along like the rest.

And yet, it’s not the bloodshed that makes the conclusion of *Aferim!* so horrifying. It’s the helpfulness of one of Carfin’s fellow slaves, who steps forward to offer the landowner a better tool for his job. Costandin has, as it turns out, the gentlest conscience in the movie. ■

## In Our Orbit Less Royal

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

**N**o literary genre is more ephemeral than art criticism. Mostly that’s a blessing, but sometimes writing of genuine value disappears from view. The 1960s and ’70s were years of tremendous vitality for American art criticism, as they were for American art. Yet today, when writers mention the debates of those days, they often focus on a handful of voices: Donald Judd, Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss, maybe some late grousings from Clement Greenberg as his pen was running dry. The criticism of many others seems to have been unjustly forgotten. Among them I would have counted, until recently, Lawrence Alloway, who wrote regularly for this magazine between 1968 and 1981. To me, he remains the great intellectual resource among the art writers of that period, so I am happy to point out that a small revival of interest in his work is under way—an essay here, a conference there, and now a useful collection of scholarly papers, *Lawrence Alloway: Critic and Curator* (Getty Research Institute; \$40), edited by Lucy Bradnock, Courtney J. Martin, and Rebecca Peabody.

Many of the essays are based on archival research in the Alloway papers housed at the Getty Research Institute, where there is clearly a lot of fascinating unpublished material. They cover topics ranging from Alloway’s evolving views of museums to his ideas on the relationship between art and photography; from his love of movies (not “film” or “cinema”) and fascination with science fiction to his mutually enriching

exchange of ideas with his fellow sci-fi fan, the artist Robert Smithson. I particularly appreciated Michael Lobel’s essay on Alloway as curator and his “global turn”; Jennifer Mundy’s account of his art-criticism course at SUNY Stony Brook; and Julia Bryan-Wilson’s exploration of his “self-reflexive” approach to criticizing the institutions of which he was a part. But important topics are missing here, including Alloway’s work as a critic in the years when he was most active writing for *The Nation*, and also the impact of his marriage to the painter Sylvia Sleigh. It must have been in part thanks to her that Alloway became one of the first male critics to make a point of writing about women artists, and especially those who were feminists.

The book leaves me hungry for a full-scale intellectual biography. Born in the London suburb of Wimbledon, in 1926, Alloway became a lecturer at the National Gallery (without having earned a college degree), then joined the Independent Group, an association of artists, designers, and intellectuals who were responsible for a series of groundbreaking exhibitions at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts. He first visited the United States in 1958 and soon resolved to move there; a teaching job at Bennington College made that possible in 1961. He wrote, curated, lectured, and taught widely until 1981, when a neurological disorder made it difficult for him to continue. He died in 1990.

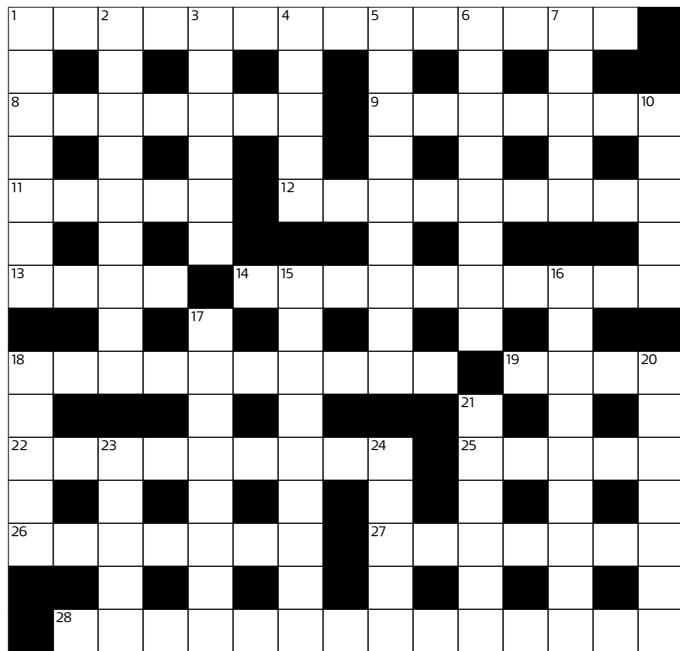
It was during his London period that Alloway coined the term “Pop art.” He was referring not—as critics later would—to the work of painters and sculptors who borrow the imagery of mass culture, but rather to the actual products of commercial culture, what Clement Greenberg dubbed “kitsch” and Theodor Adorno scorned as “the culture industry.” Alloway never conceived of cultures in opposition or in a hierarchy; for him, as he later put it, “Unique oil paintings and highly

personal poems as well as mass-distributed films and group-aimed magazines can be placed within a continuum.” He wrote about “artists as consumers” and wanted “an approach that does not depend...on the exclusion of most of the symbols that people live by.” In practice, this meant taking a calmly quasi-sociological view of art as one of many information systems at work in the world, itself capable of housing many different, seemingly incompatible tendencies. He sought a criticism that would be “less royal”; that is, less prone to unsupported authoritative pronouncements based on highly partial narratives of historical development (or what he called “drastic simplificatory strategies to reduce the hectic scene to congruence”). Above all, he always wrote with genuine curiosity and an eye for quality.

Unlike critics who were concerned with identifying art’s one true path into the future, Alloway could write with equal perspicacity and empathy about a Pop artist like Roy Lichtenstein, an Abstract Expressionist like Norman Bluhm, a realist like Isabel Bishop, a minimalist like Agnes Martin, and a conceptualist like Sol LeWitt. Moreover, he could take a similarly sympathetic critical stance toward the functioning of institutions like the Venice Biennale—where he identified the importance of what we’ve since learned to call “globalization”—as well as art magazines, commercial and cooperative galleries, and museums. He celebrated the ever-widening reach of culture and the growth of its audience to include all classes and conditions of people—and therefore many categories of taste. Never a detached observer, he was always opinionated. As he wrote of art criticism in general: “The individuality of the critic, not the universal handiness of his ideas, is a real point of value.” ■

# Puzzle No. 3389

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



## ACROSS

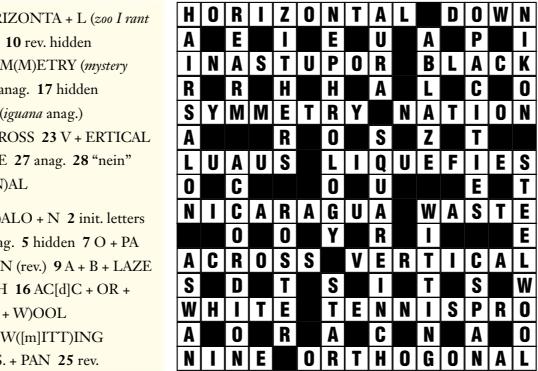
1 Feminist pioneer's garments, with some pieces reused (8,6)  
 8 Term heard at the card table—or in presidential politics (2-5)  
 9 Pirate's rude eldest child, it's said (7)  
 11 Quietly move cover in back, e.g. (5)  
 12 What you would hear at the beginning of a TV show: "The subatomic particle appears with gravity" (5,4)  
 13 Bless courageous and enthusiastic review (4)  
 14 Creation's first computer? It's made of cartilage (5,5)  
 18 Hannah or Bob or Sarah beginning to dislike European city (10)  
 19 Overlook potassium in drink (4)  
 22 Complained (that is, moaned) at first snippet of ancient wisdom (5,4)  
 25 Where B is a dish: in Italy (5)  
 26 Grotesque magenta badge (4,3)  
 27 Sulfuric acid or calcium permanganate in the West, they say (7)

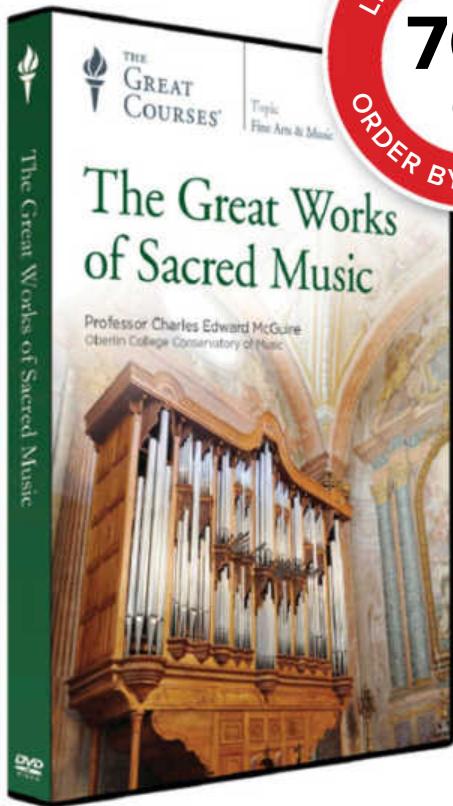
28 Start to watch anyone but Martina on the tennis court, feeding regressive monk's willful ignorance (4-10)

## DOWN

1 Mother and daughter in Shakespeare rejected head honcho (7)  
 2 Fetching confused traveler around one (9)  
 3 In the morning, second hand tickled (6)  
 4 Émigré is down to adopt a Windows operating system (5)  
 5 Revise memos or include duplicate e-mail for a suburban voter (6,3)  
 6 Close to avoiding a place where you might gamble with chemical weaponry (5,3)  
 7 Time to put together an inspiration for poets (5)  
 10 Scoundrel, hero, guerrilla's hostage (5)  
 15 Audacity is going astray amid uneven retreat (7-2)  
 16 Unfinished Hershey's candy in broken pinata from Southern Asian (9)  
 17 Current tune: "Word Salad" (8)  
 18 Uninitiated primate is able to produce a nut (5)  
 20 Solo cat chasing soft ghost (7)  
 21 Choice of brew when leaders have changed places (6)  
 23 Deity's male disciples making noodles (5)  
 24 Bum's low church (5)

## SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3388





## Enjoy the Majesty and Significance of Sacred Music

Western concert music is one of humanity's most sublime artistic traditions. Significantly, this great musical language—encompassing genres from symphonic and instrumental music to choral works and opera—was created through the meeting of art and faith.

Professor Charles McGuire of the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music possesses a richly detailed knowledge of this tradition, and fills these 16 engrossing lectures with essential insights and stunning musical excerpts. You'll cover over 1,200 years of music, from medieval chant to the massive sacred works of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including works by Handel, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and more. Join a brilliant musicologist in discovering unique masterpieces, taking in a rich panorama of Western sacred music and its most magnificent artistic landmarks.

**Offer expires 02/16/16**

**THEGREATCOURSES.COM/8NTN**  
**1-800-832-2412**

## The Great Works of Sacred Music

Taught by Professor Charles Edward McGuire  
OBERLIN COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

### LECTURE TITLES

1. Hallelujah, Amen: The World of Sacred Music
2. From Chant to Early Sacred Polyphony
3. The Golden Age of Polyphony
4. The Age of Reformation: Who Will Sing?
5. Sacred Music in a Secular World
6. Man and Meaning: Bach's Cantatas
7. Art for Art's Sake: Bach's *Mass in B Minor*
8. Handel's Great Oratorio: *Messiah*
9. *Messiah*: From Entertainment to Ritual
10. Mozart's *Requiem*: Praise and Memory
11. Haydn's *The Creation*
12. God, Man, Music, and Beethoven
13. Mendelssohn's *Elijah*
14. Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*
15. Sacred Music in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century
16. Come, All Ye Faithful: Music of Christmas

**The Great Works of Sacred Music**  
Course no. 7316 | 16 lectures (45 minutes/lecture)

**SAVE UP TO \$190**

**DVD ~~\$269.95~~ NOW \$79.95**

**CD ~~\$199.95~~ NOW \$59.95**

+\$10 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

Priority Code: 123417

For over 25 years, The Great Courses has brought the world's foremost educators to millions who want to go deeper into the subjects that matter most. No exams. No homework. Just a world of knowledge available anytime, anywhere. Download or stream to your laptop or PC, or use our free mobile apps for iPad, iPhone, or Android. Over 550 courses available at [www.TheGreatCourses.com](http://www.TheGreatCourses.com).



"Threatened by long-term declining participation in shooting sports, the firearms industry has poured millions of dollars into a broad campaign to ensure its future by getting guns into the hands of more, and younger, children."

- *The New York Times, January 26, 2013*

If the industry is to survive, gun enthusiasts must embrace all youth shooting activities, including ones, "using semiautomatic firearms with magazines holding 30-100 rounds."

-Andy Fink, *Editor of Junior Shooters magazine*

## The Domini Social Equity Fund doesn't invest in gun makers. We never have.

We make all of our investments in pursuit of two fundamental goals: ecological sustainability and universal human dignity. Guns don't make our cut.

Consider an investment in the Domini Social Equity Fund today.

**Domini**   
**SOCIAL INVESTMENTS<sup>®</sup>**  
Investing for Good<sup>SM</sup>

[DominiFunds.com](http://DominiFunds.com)  
1-800-762-6814  
Available for IRAs

Before investing, consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses. Contact us for a prospectus containing this information. Read it carefully. The Domini Social Equity Fund is not insured and is subject to market risks such as sector concentration and style risk. You may lose money. DSIL Investment Services LLC, Distributor. 1/16